



Convective processes, Clouds in the climate system, and their Spatial organization

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Theoretical Advances in Planetary Flows and Climate Dynamics

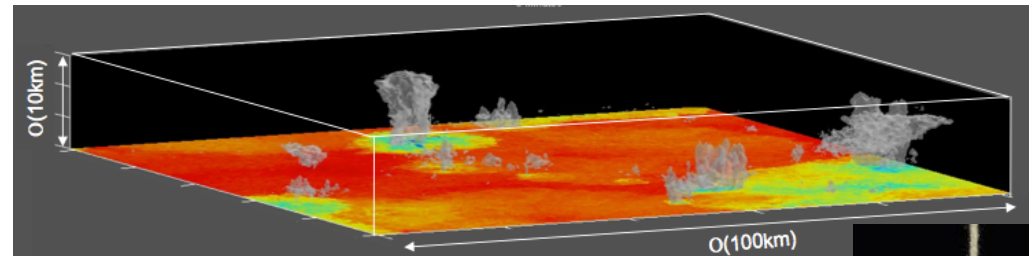
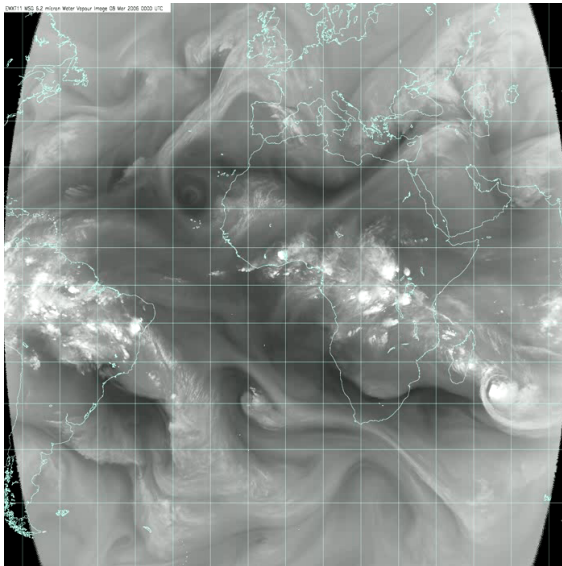
Les Houches, March 2015

Outline

- Clouds in the climate system
- Spatial distribution of tropical deep convection

*Radiative-convective equilibrium
Clouds over surface temperature*

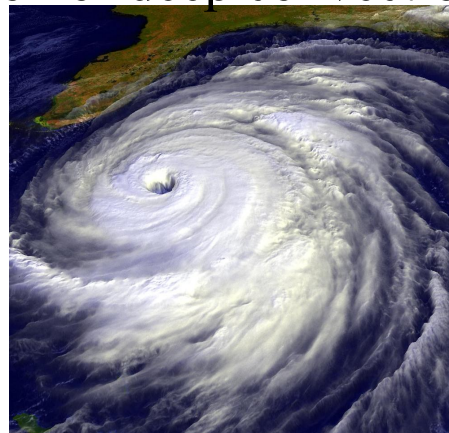
*Water vapor
from satellite*



Tropical « pop corn » convection



- Spontaneous organization of deep convection



[Raymond, Zeng QJRM 2000;
Bretherton, Blossey, Khairoutdinov, JAS 2005;
Sobel, Bellon, Bacmeister GRL 2007;
Muller, Held, JAS 2012;
Tobin, Bony, Roca, J Clim 2012;
Emanuel, Wing, Vincent JAMES 2013;
Craig and Mack, JGR, 2013;
Jeevanjee, Romps, GRL 2013;
Khairoutdinov, Emanuel, JAMES 2013;
Shi, Bretherton JAMES 2014;
Bony et al, Nature Geoscience 2015]

Clouds in the climate system

Courtesy John Taylor

Fluid Dynamics of Sustainability and the Environment



“How inappropriate to call this planet Earth, when clearly it is Ocean.” - Arthur C. Clark

Clouds in the climate system

Courtesy John Taylor

Fluid Dynamics of Sustainability and the Environment



and clouds
↓

"How inappropriate to call this planet Earth, when clearly it is Ocean." - Arthur C. Clark

Clouds in the climate system

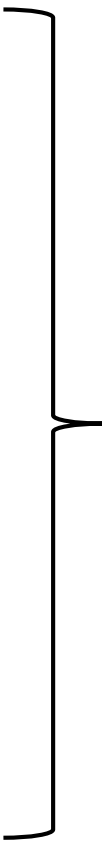
Cumulus: heap, pile

Stratus: flatten out, cover with a layer

Cirrus: lock of hair, tuft of horsehair

Nimbus: precipitating cloud

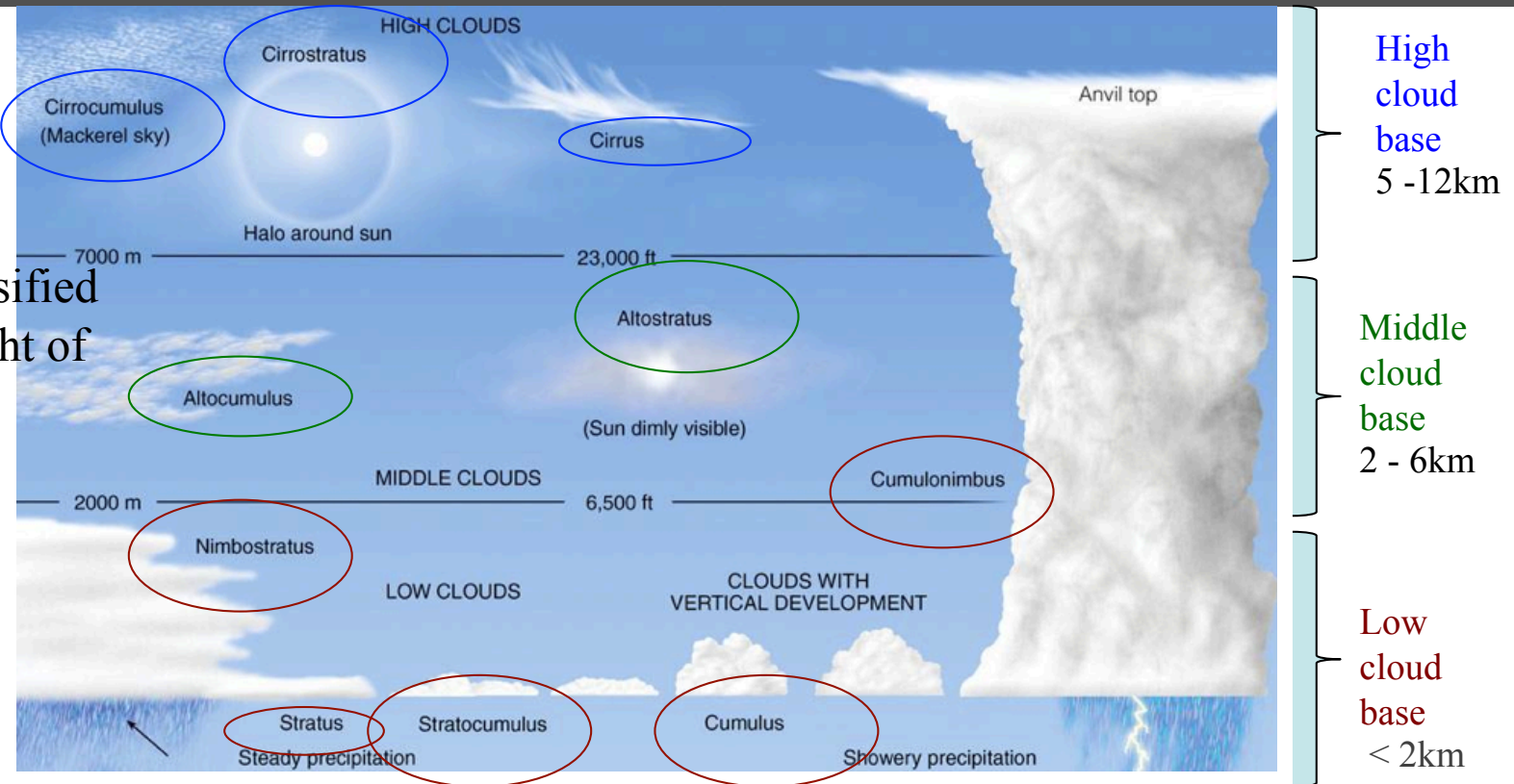
Altim: height



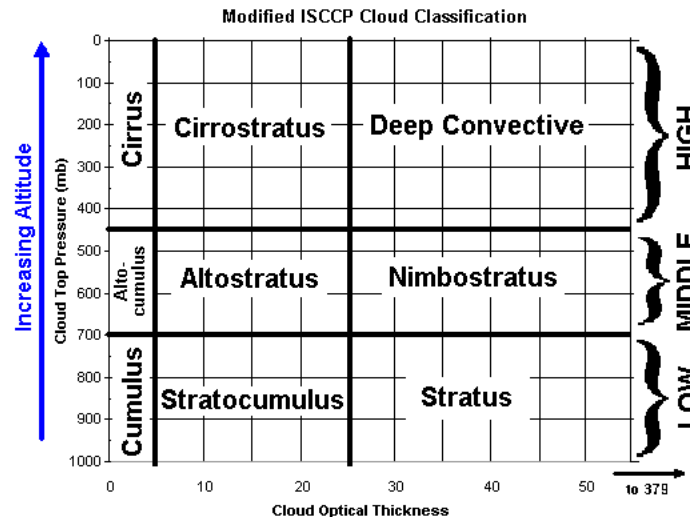
Combined to define
10 cloud types

Clouds in the climate system

Clouds were classified according to height of cloud base and appearance



ISCCP cloud classification



Classified according to cloud top pressure

Clouds in the climate system

Cirrostratus



Cirrus



Cirrocumulus



Clouds in the climate system

Altostratus



Altostratus

Clouds in the climate system



Stratocumulus



Cumulonimbus



Nimbostratus



Cumulus

Clouds in the climate system

Other spectacular Clouds...

Mammatus clouds (typically below anvil clouds)



Shelf clouds (gust front)

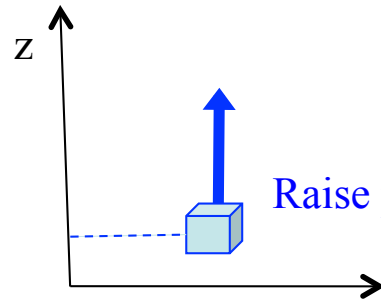


Lenticular clouds (over orography)



Clouds in the climate system

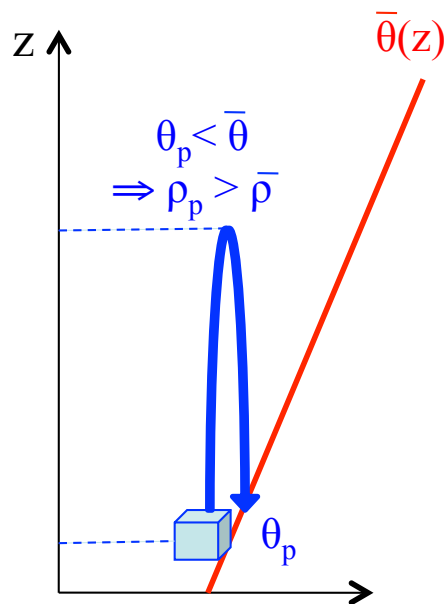
When is an atmosphere unstable to dry convection? => parcel method



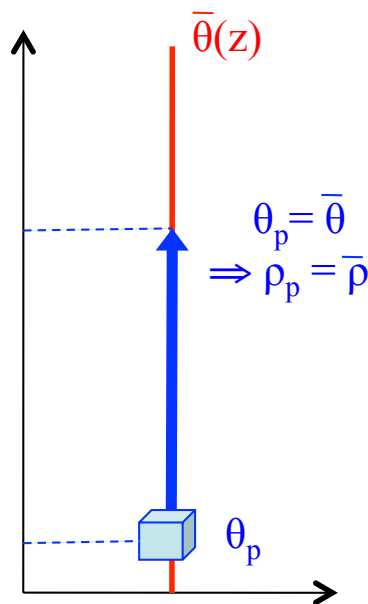
Raise parcel adiabatically. Comes back to initial position?

(Potential temperature $\theta = T (p_0 / p)^{R/c_p}$ conserved under adiabatic displacements)

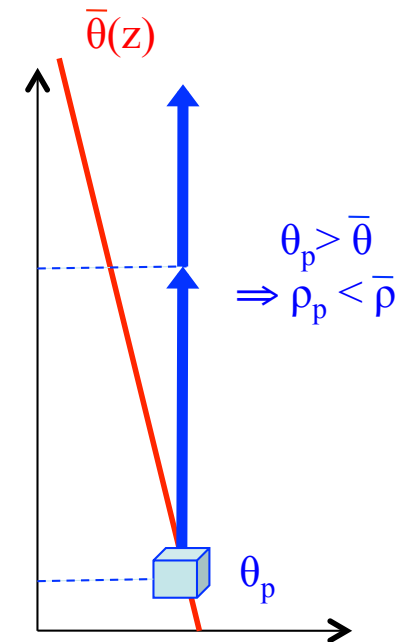
[Emanuel 94]



STABLE



NEUTRAL



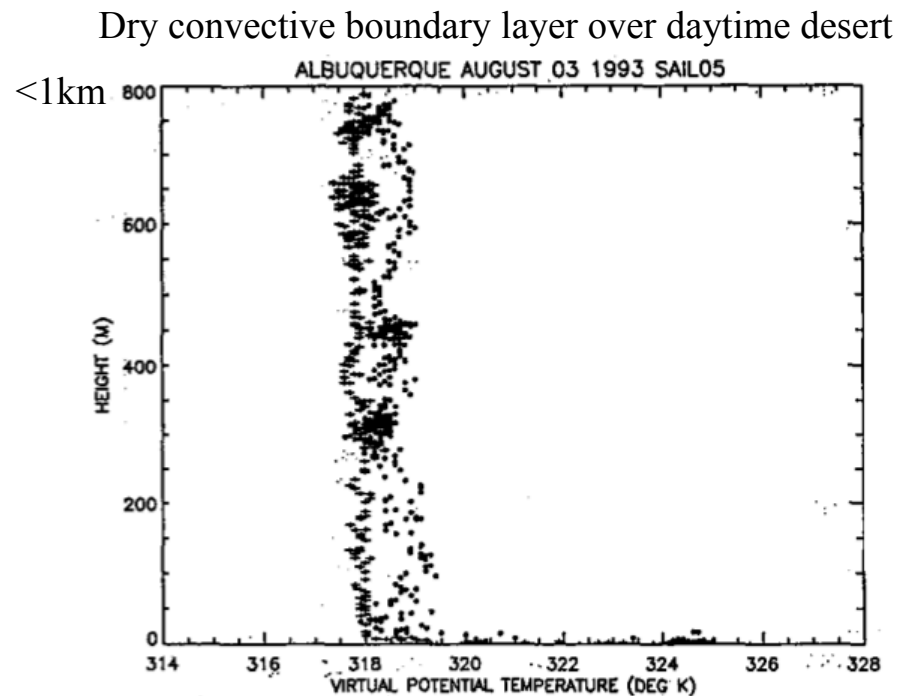
UNSTABLE

When potential temperature $\theta = T (p_0 / p)^{R/c_p}$ decreases with height

Clouds in the climate system

Convective adjustment time scales is very fast (minutes for dry convection) compared to destabilizing factors (surface warming, atmospheric radiative cooling...)

=> The **observed state is very close to convective neutrality**



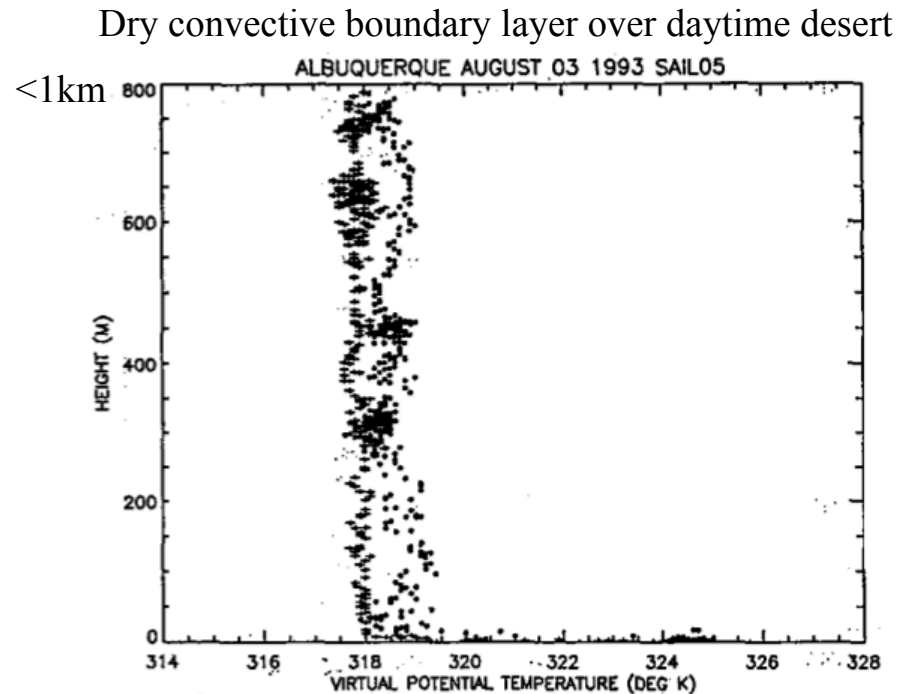
[Renno and Williams, 1995]

But above a thin boundary layer, not true anymore that $\theta = \text{constant}$. Why?...

Clouds in the climate system

Convective adjustment time scales is very fast (minutes for dry convection) compared to destabilizing factors (surface warming, atmospheric radiative cooling...)

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[Renno and Williams, 1995]

But above a thin boundary layer, not true anymore that $\theta = \text{constant}$. Why?...

Most atmospheric convection involves phase change of water

Significant latent heat with phase changes of water = **Moist Convection**

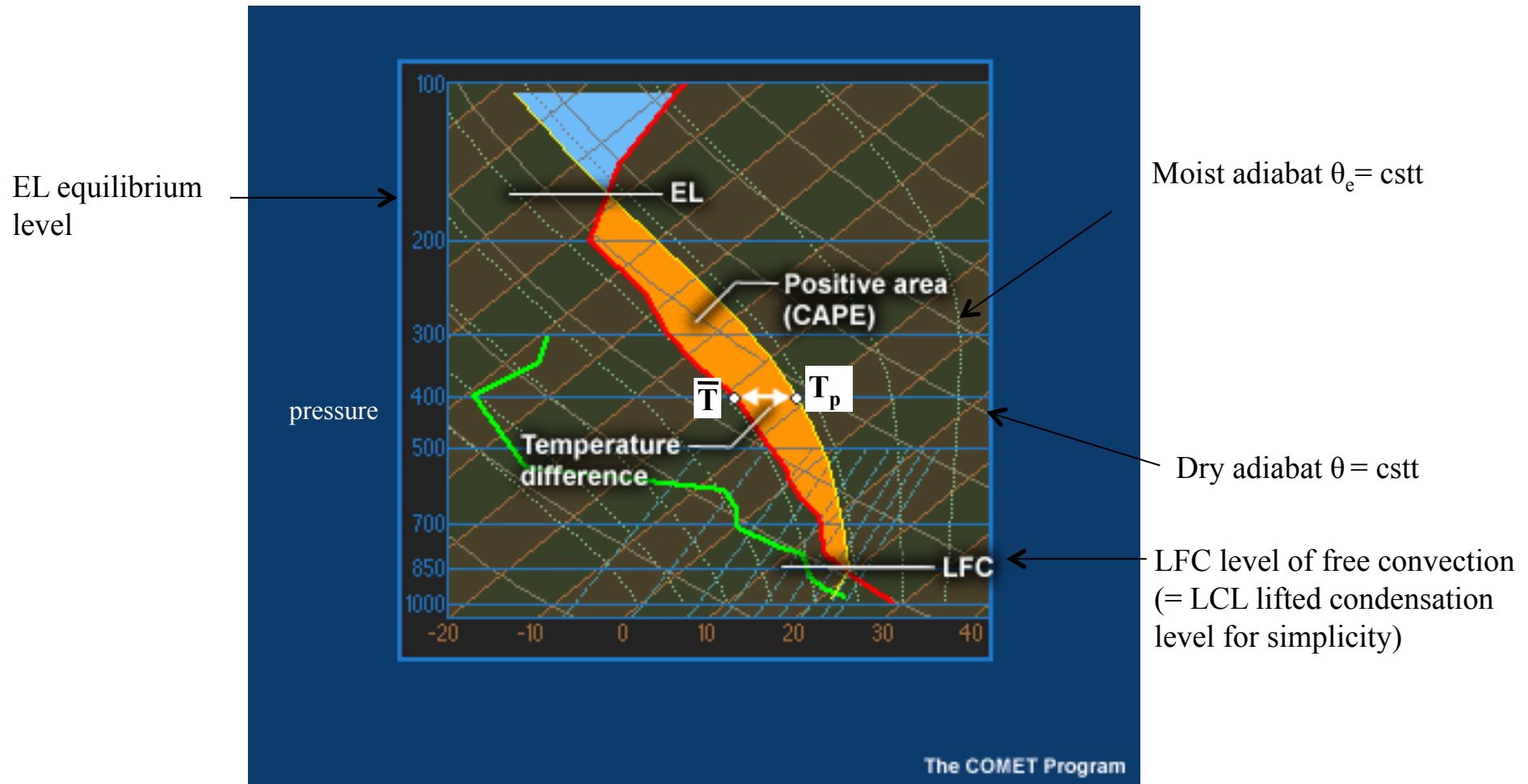
Equivalent potential temperature $\theta_e = T (p_0 / p)^{R/c_p} e^{L_v q_v / (c_p T)}$ is (approximately) conserved under adiabatic displacements

[Emanuel 94]

Clouds in the climate system

When is an atmosphere unstable to moist convection ?

Skew T diagram (isoT slanted), atmospheric T in red



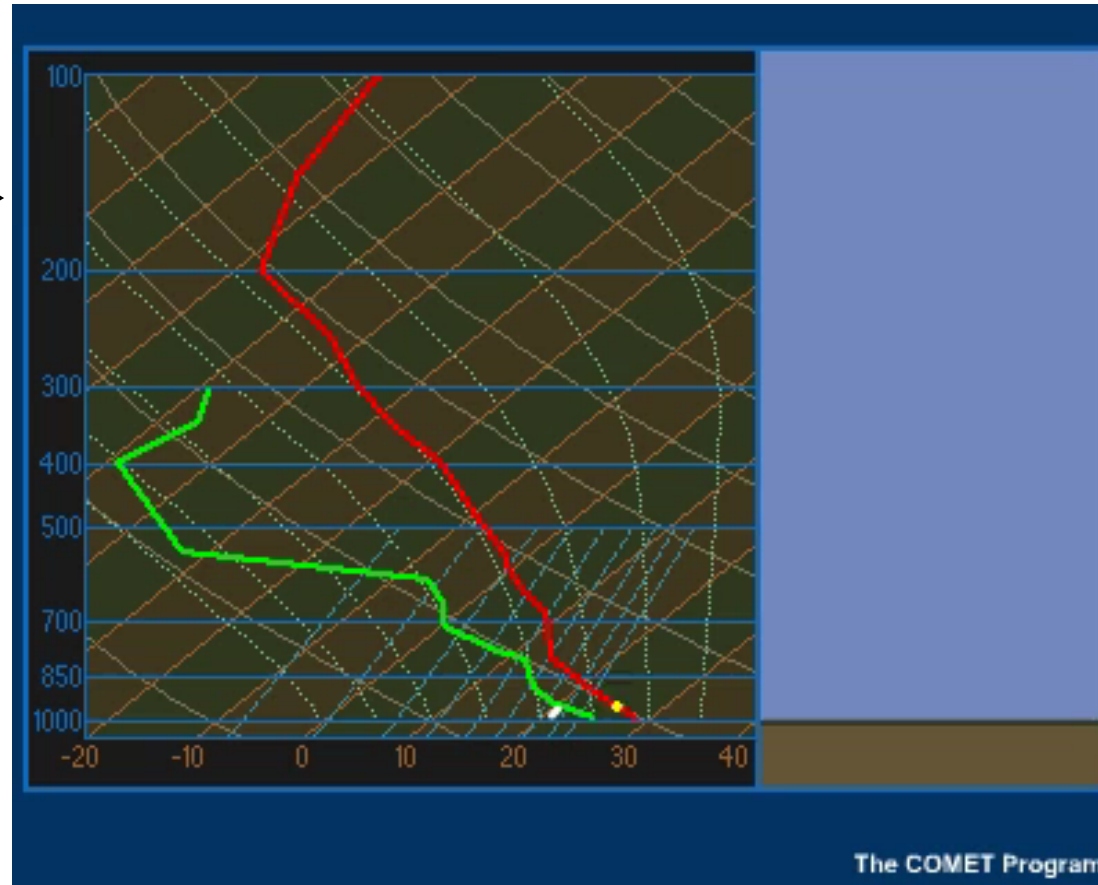
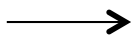
CAPE: convective available potential energy

Clouds in the climate system

Moist convection

Parcel = yellow dot

EL equilibrium
level



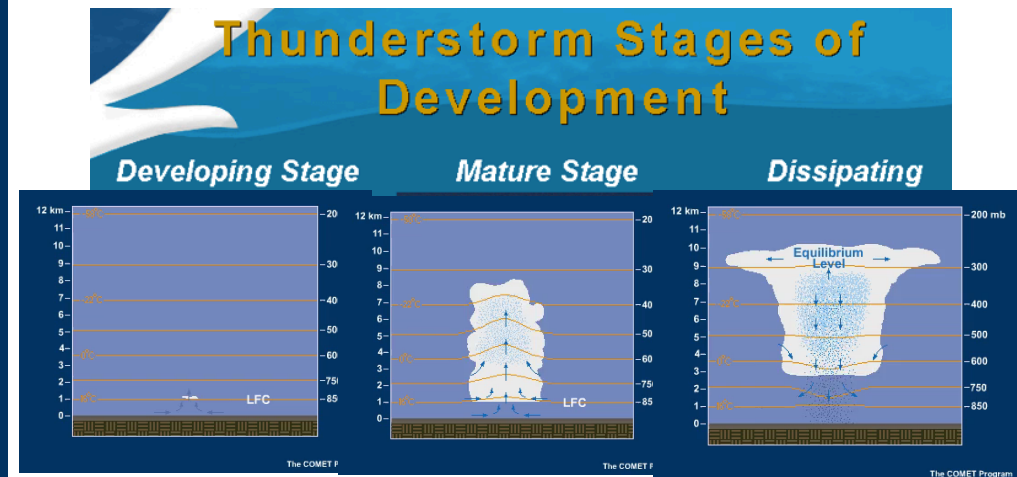
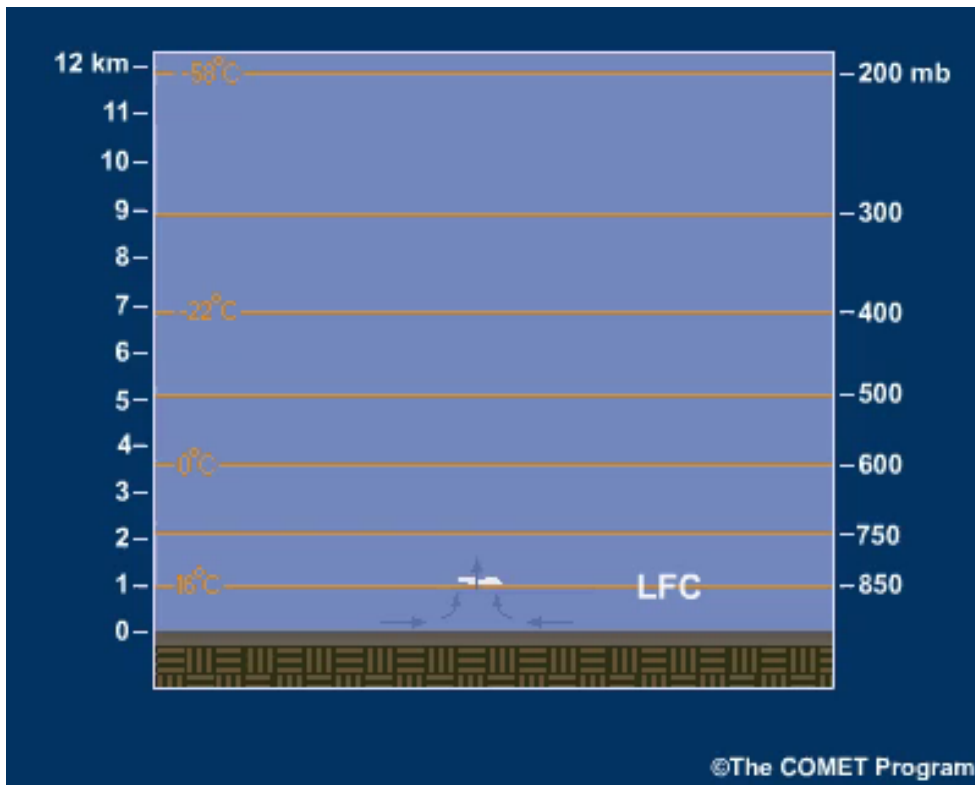
← LFC level of free
convection

CAPE: convective available potential energy

Clouds in the climate system

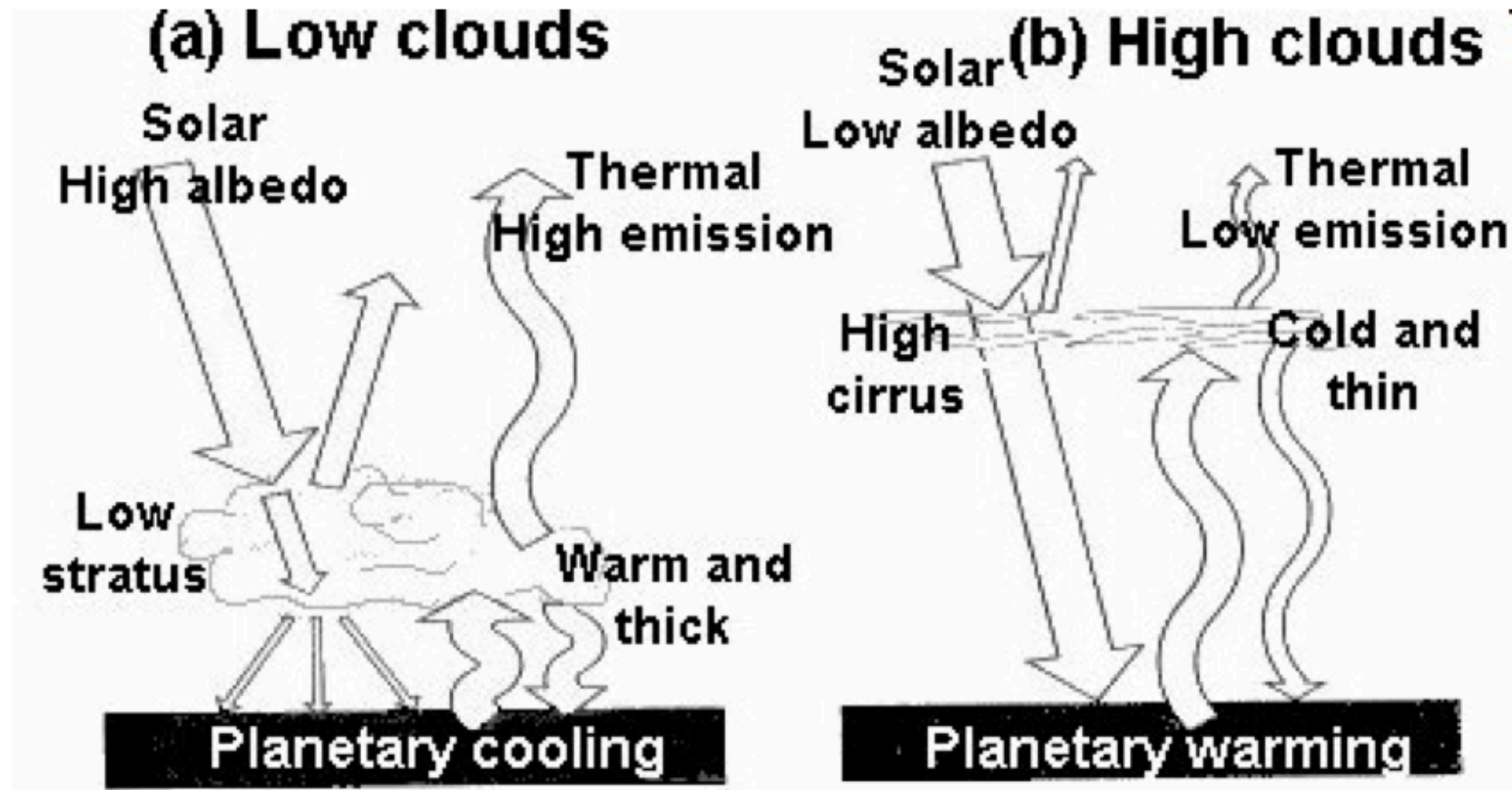
If enough atmospheric instability present, cumulus clouds are capable of producing serious storms!!!

Strong updrafts develop in the cumulus cloud => mature, deep cumulonimbus cloud.
Associated with heavy rain, lightning and thunder.



Evaporative driven cold pools

Clouds in the climate system



More low clouds:

Little LW effect ($\sim \sigma T^4$, $T \sim T_{sfc}$)

Strong SW cooling

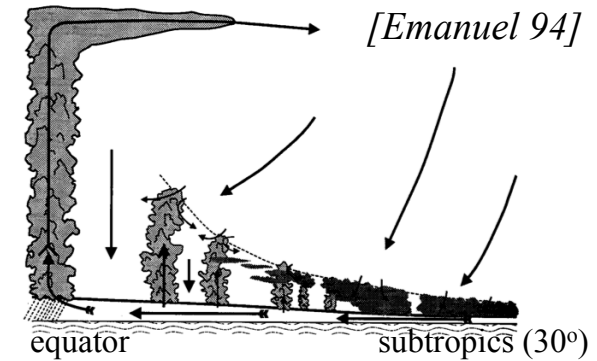
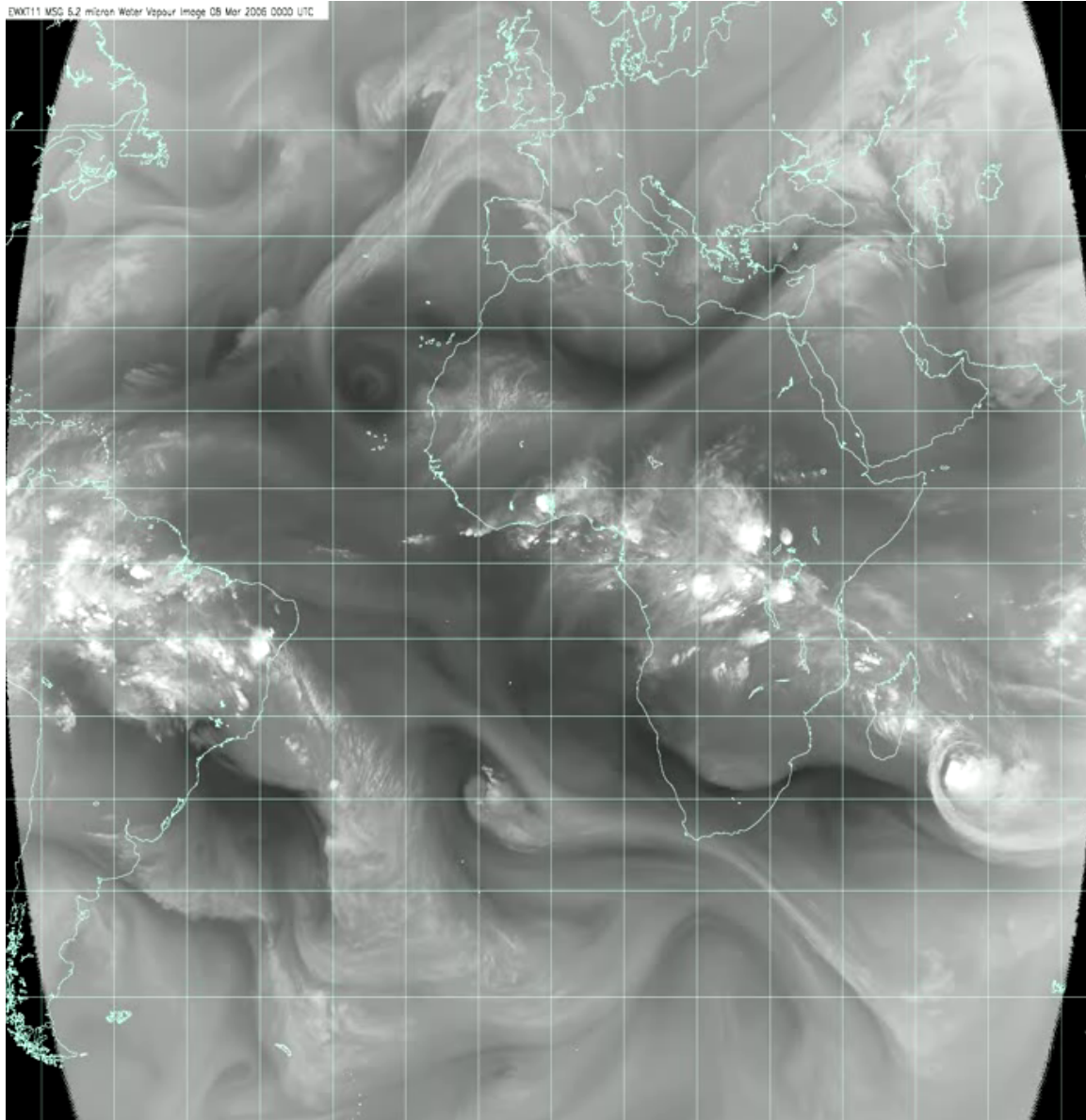
More high clouds:

Strong LW warming ($\sim \sigma T^4$, $T \ll T_{sfc}$)

Little SW effect

Clouds in the climate system

Water vapor from satellite

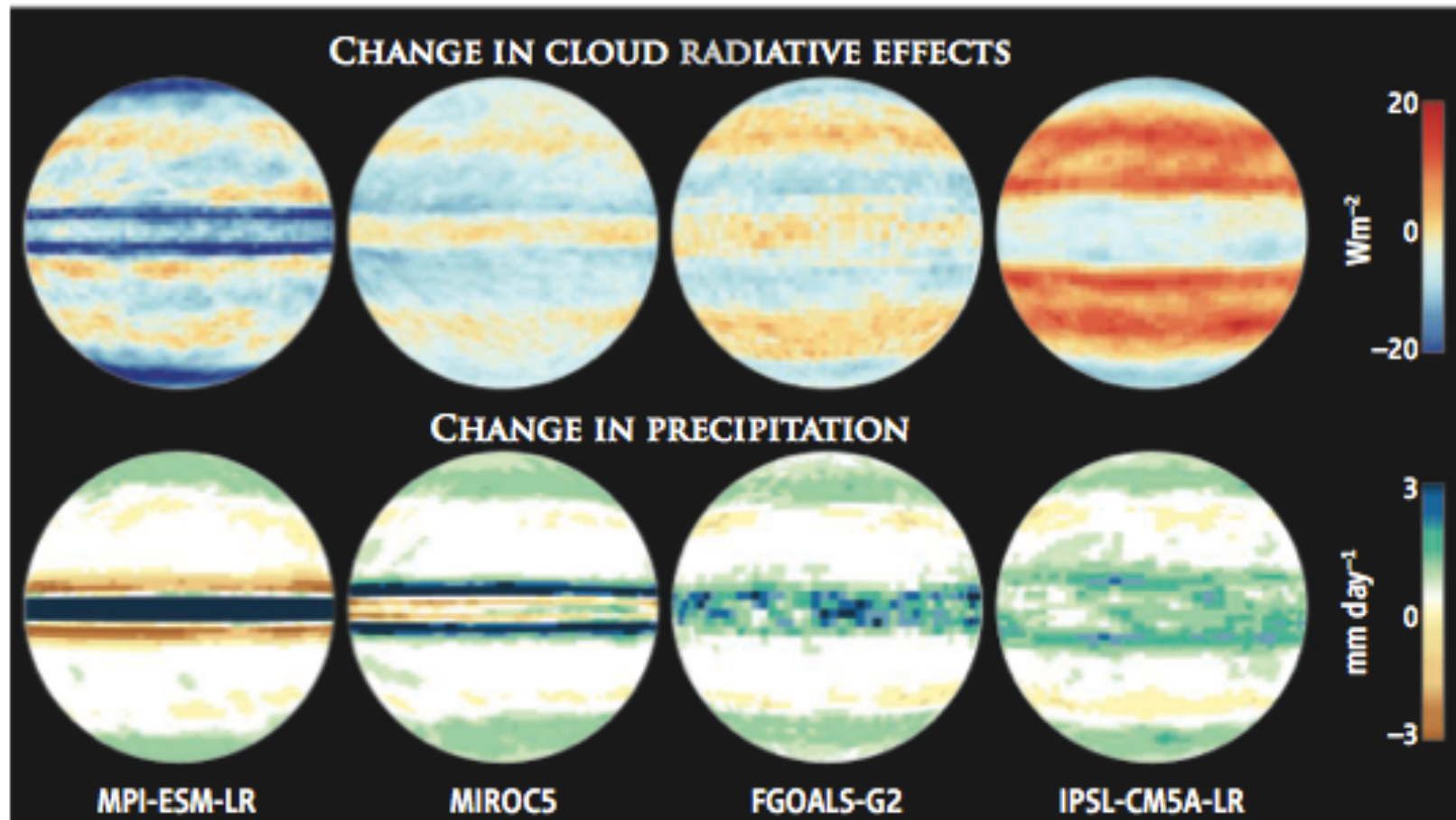


Small-scale
tropical
convection ⇒ parameterized in
global climate
models

Uncertainties in convective
parameterizations ...

Clouds in the climate system

Uncertainties in convective parameterizations



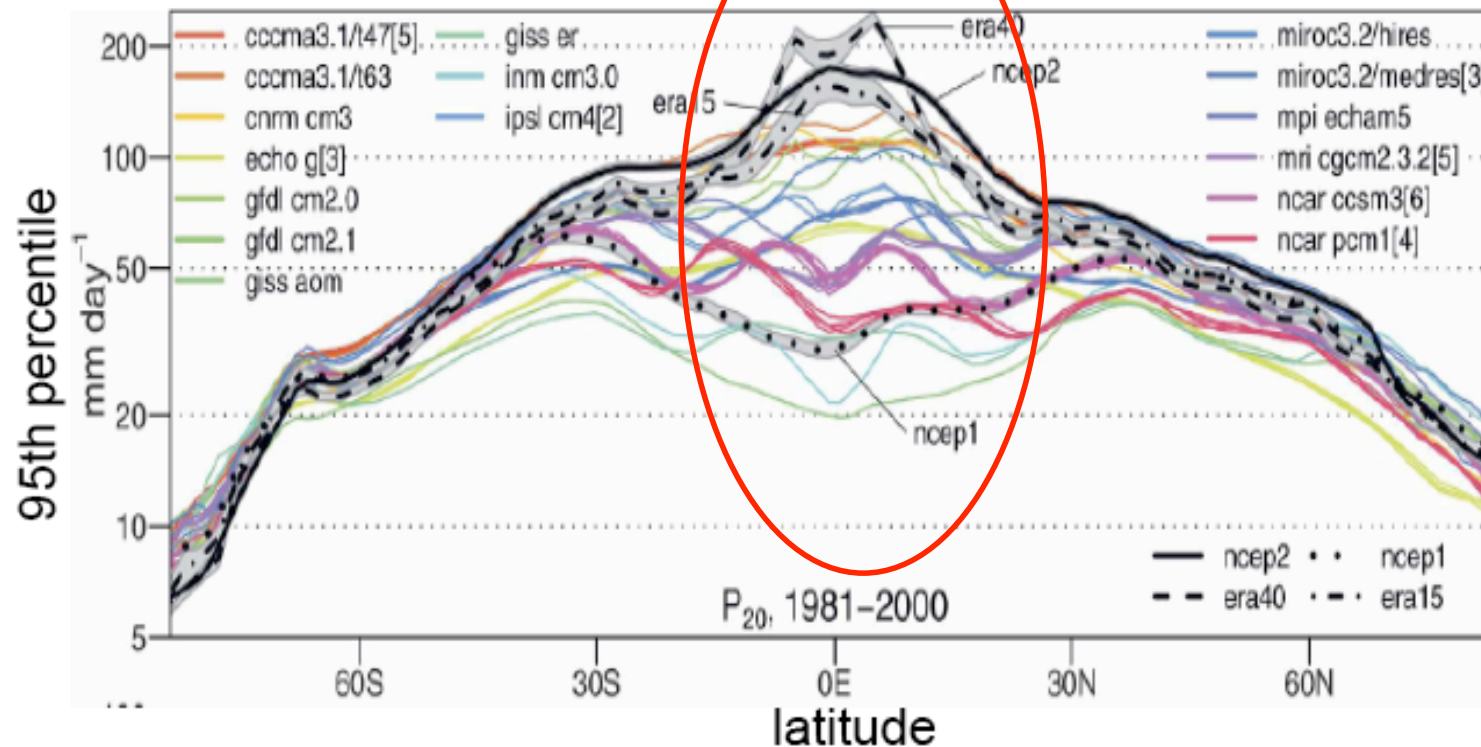
Wide variation. The response patterns of clouds and precipitation to warming vary dramatically depending on the climate model, even in the simplest model configuration. Shown are changes in the radiative effects of clouds and in precipitation accompanying a uniform warming (4°C) predicted by four models from Phase 5 of the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP5) for a water planet with prescribed surface temperatures.

[Stevens & Bony, Science 2013]

Clouds in the climate system

Uncertainties in convective parameterizations

Precip extremes (95th percentile) in climate models and reanalysis



⇒ Values NOT consistent in tropics and subtropics [Kharin et al, 06]

⇒ Not correlated with resolution, hence **convection param**

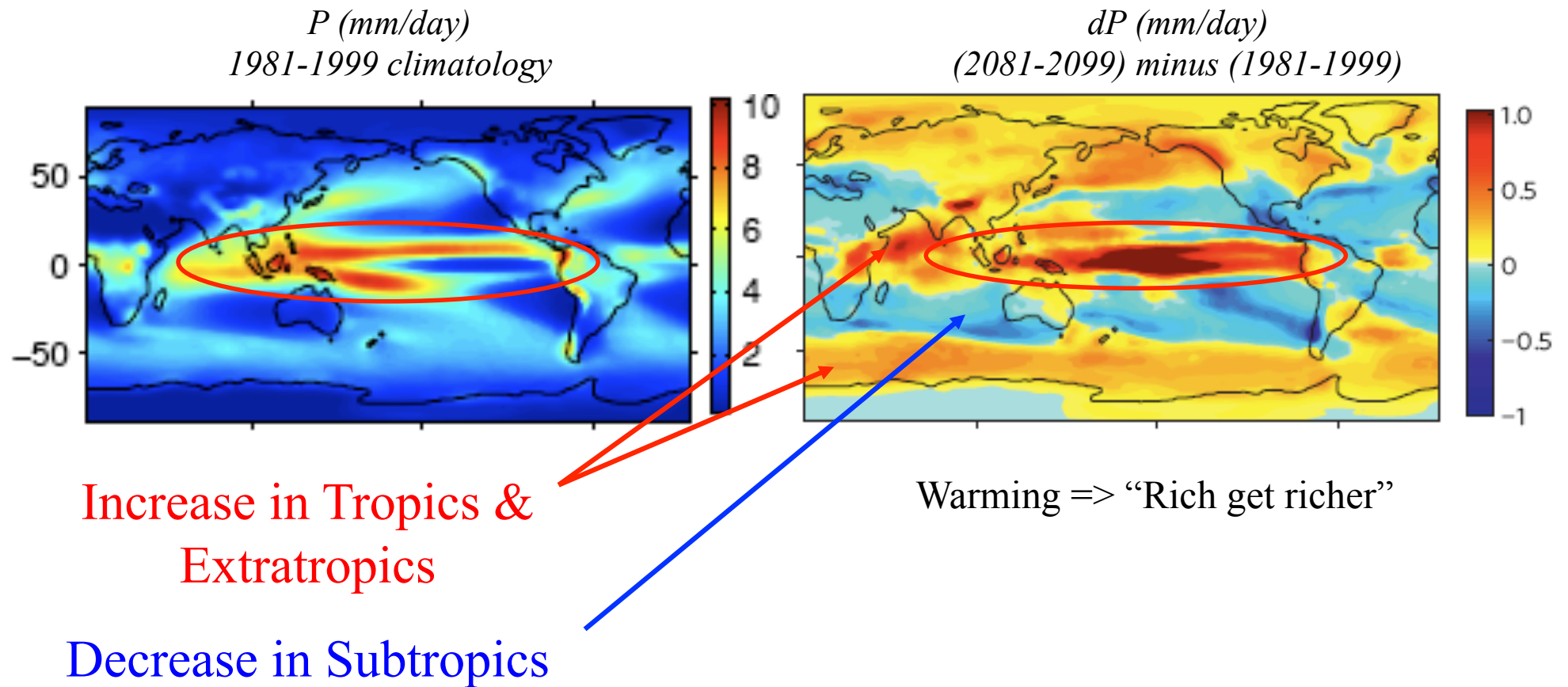
⇒ **Models disagree** [O’Gorman&Schneider, 09; Sugiyama,Shiogama,Emori, 10]

Clouds in the climate system

Robust responses between models

[Held & Soden, J. Clim., 2006]

1200+ citations



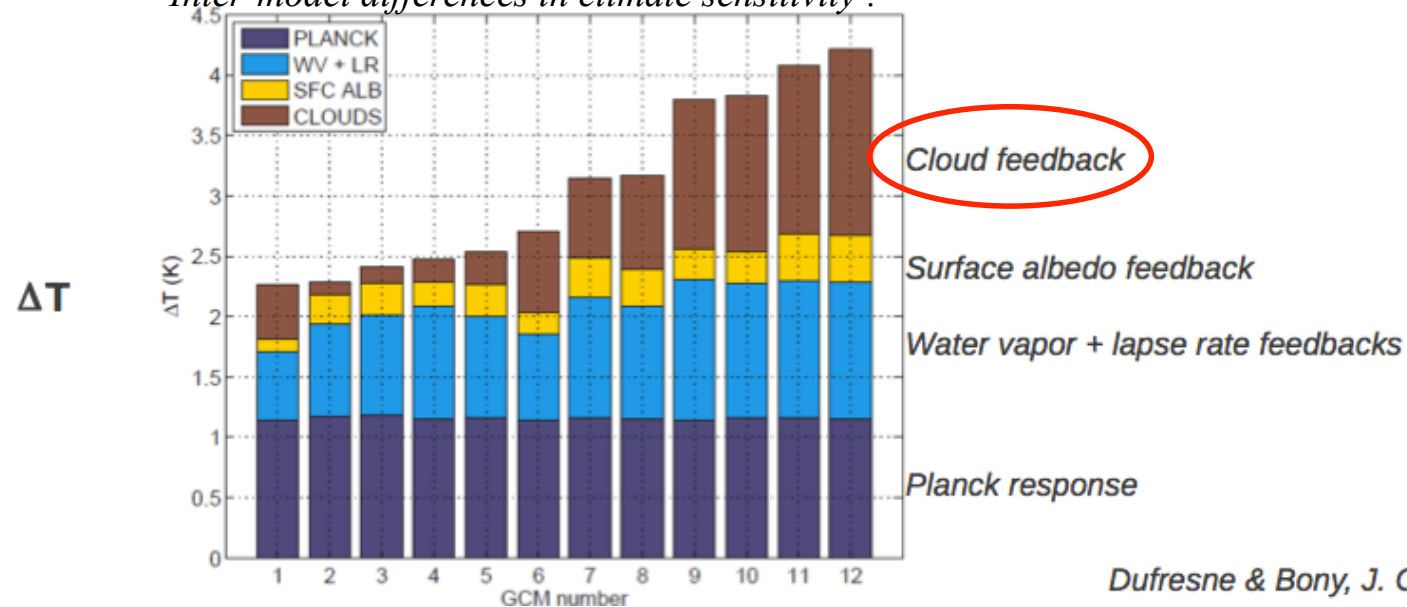
[Chou & Neelin, J. Clim., 2004]

Muller & O’Gorman, Nat. Clim. Change, 2011]

Clouds in the climate system

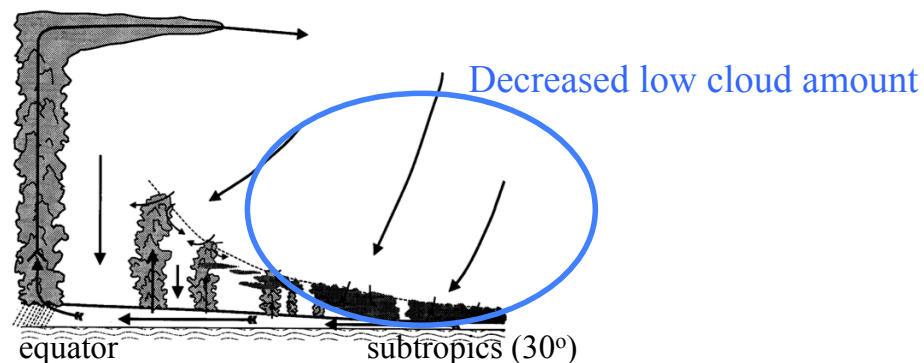
Climate sensitivity: equilibrium change in global mean surface temperature ΔT_s when atmospheric CO_2 is doubled.

Inter-model differences in climate sensitivity :



Dufresne & Bony, J. Clim., 2008

Uncertainty partly due to decreased low cloud amount



Zelinka et al., J. Climate, 2013

Clouds in the climate system

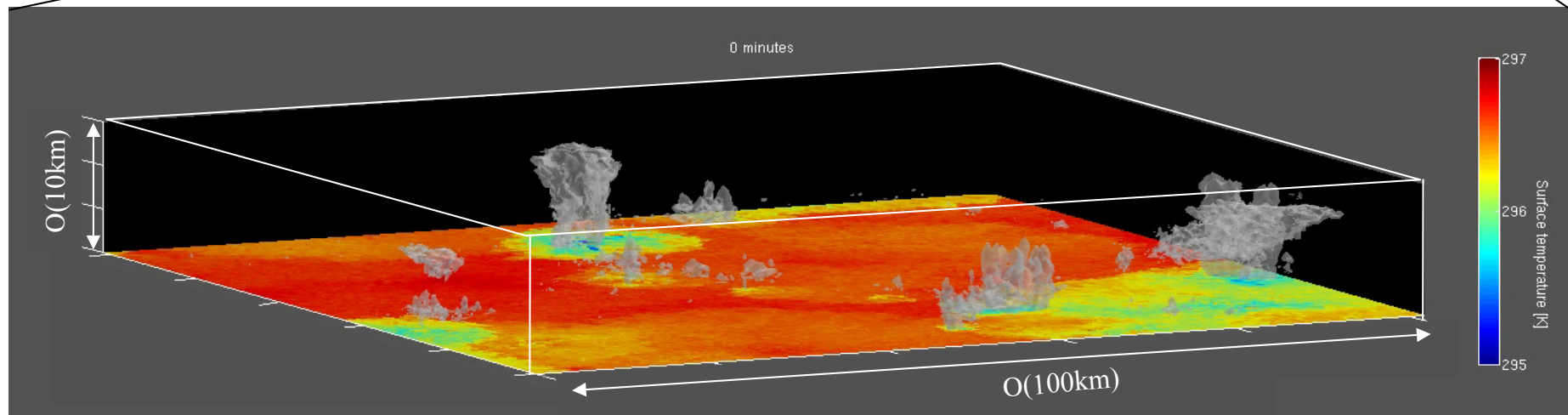
Grid of Global Climate Model

Question of interest:

What is the spatial distribution of deep convective clouds?



Clouds (gray surfaces) over near-surface temperature (colors)



Clouds in the climate system

SUMMARY PART 1: CLOUDS IN THE CLIMATE SYSTEM:

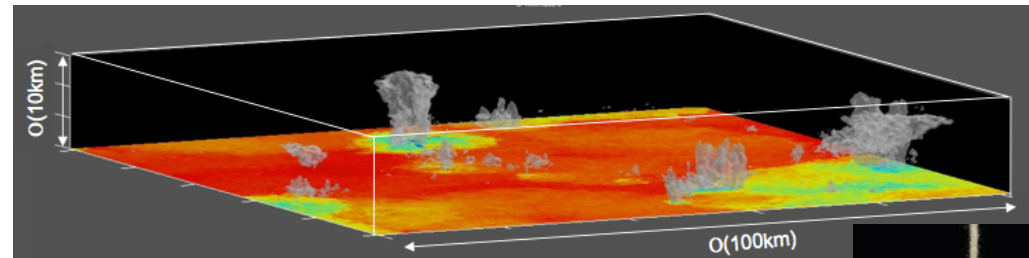
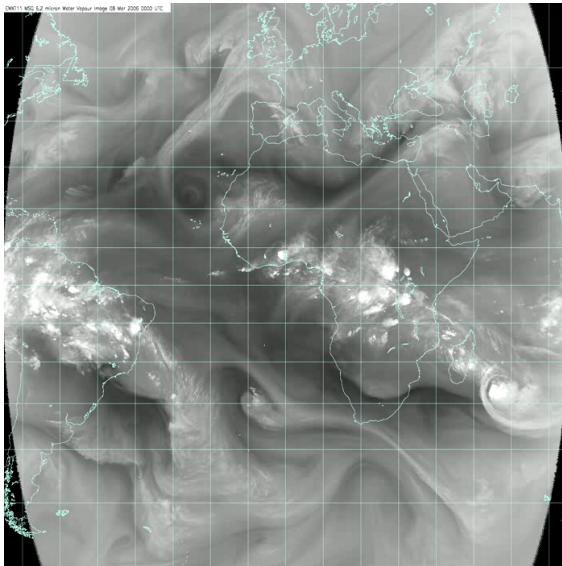
- ⇒ Clouds are one of the largest sources of **uncertainty** in climate predictions
- ⇒ **Radiative** impact important, both in longwave and shortwave
Affect atmospheric energy budget
- ⇒ Uncertainty from :
 - Change in **low cloud cover**
 - Convective **parameterizations** of deep clouds

Outline

- Clouds in the climate system
- Spatial distribution of tropical deep convection

*Radiative-convective equilibrium
Clouds over surface temperature*

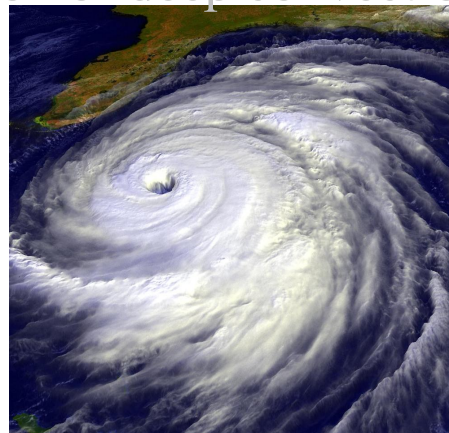
*Water vapor
from satellite*



Tropical « pop corn » convection



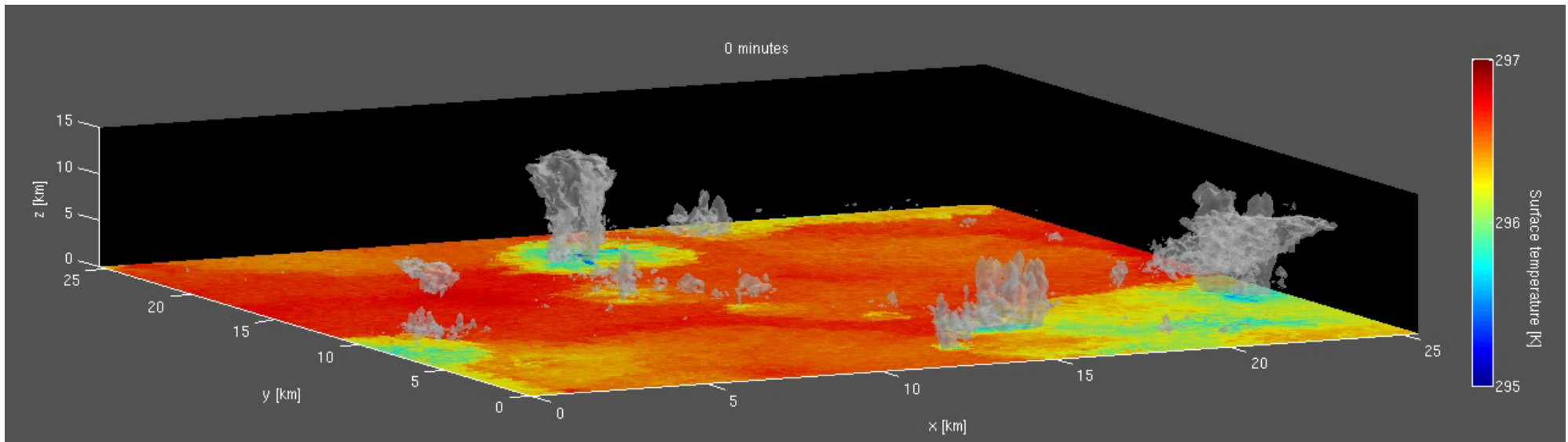
- Spontaneous organization of deep convection



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Khairoutdinov, Emanuel, JAMES 2013;
Shi, Bretherton JAMES 2014;
Bony et al, Nature Geoscience 2015]

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Clouds over near-surface temperature



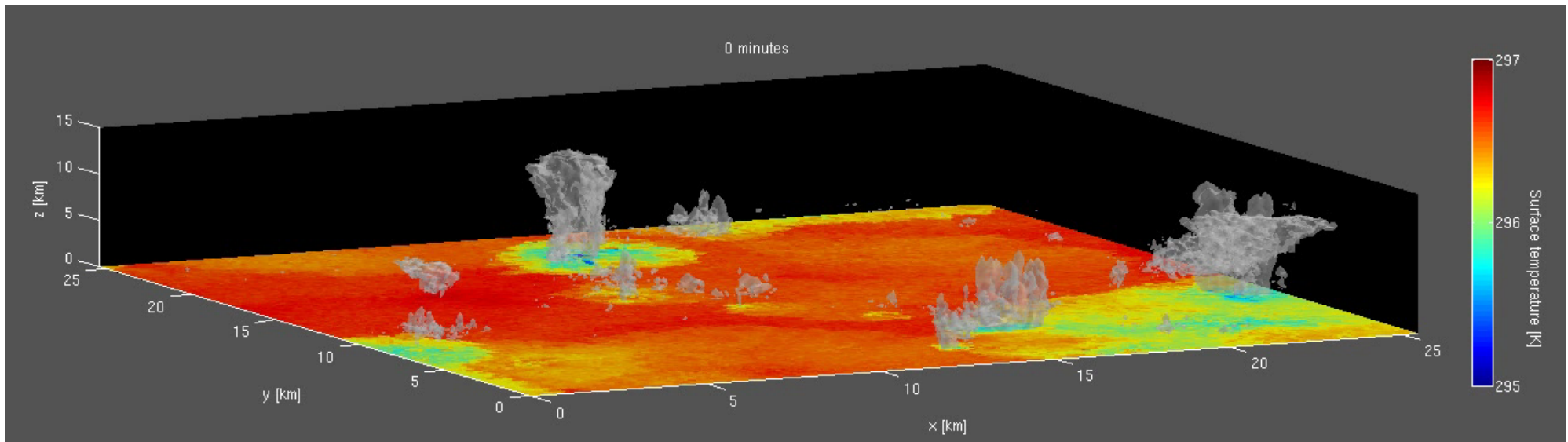
Radiative cooling in the interior of the atmosphere => **destabilizes**

Convective updrafts bring moist, high energy air from surface to interior of the atmosphere => **stabilizes**

Convective downdrafts bring cold&dry, low energy air from interior to surface => **stabilizes**

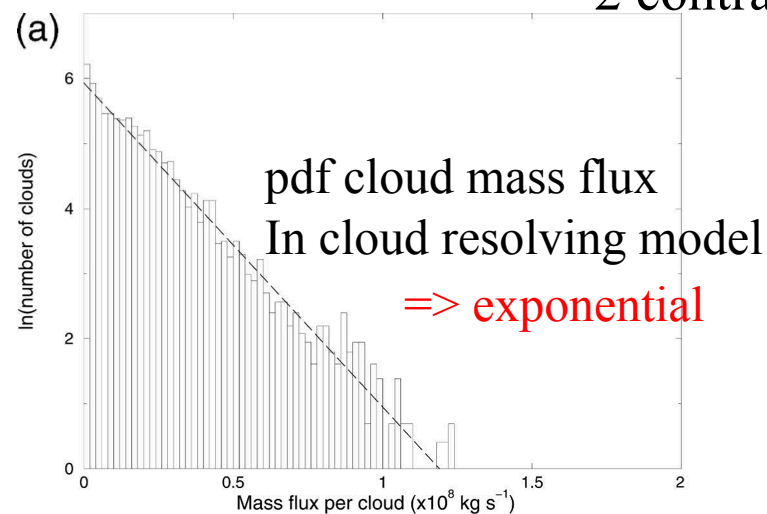
Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Clouds over near-surface temperature

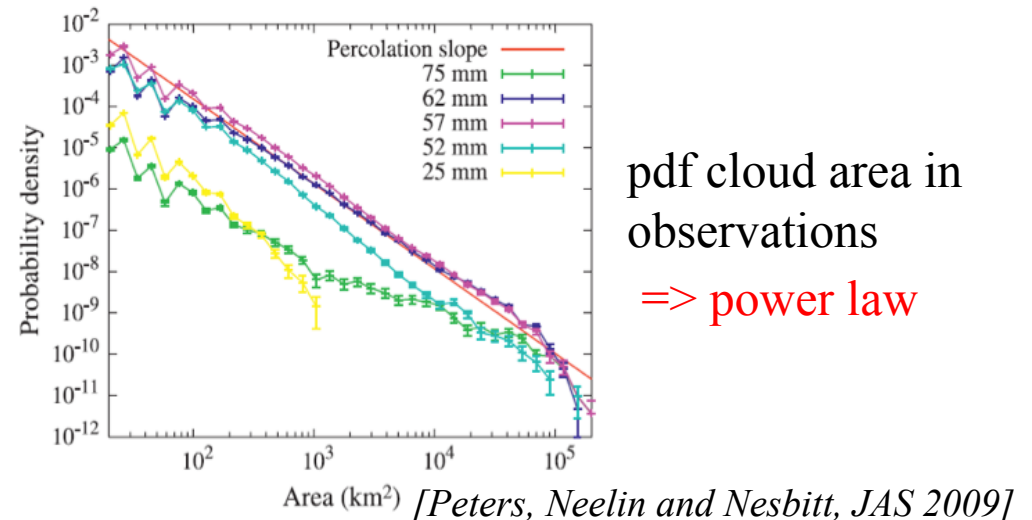


Our question: What is the spatial distribution of deep clouds?

2 contradictory results :



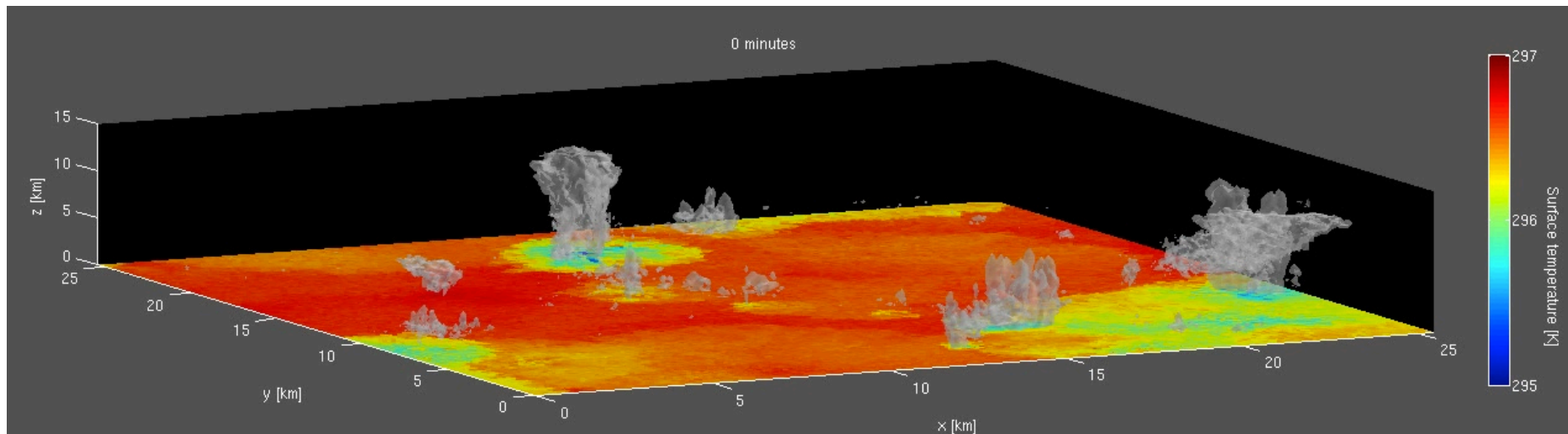
[Cohen and Craig, JAS 2006]



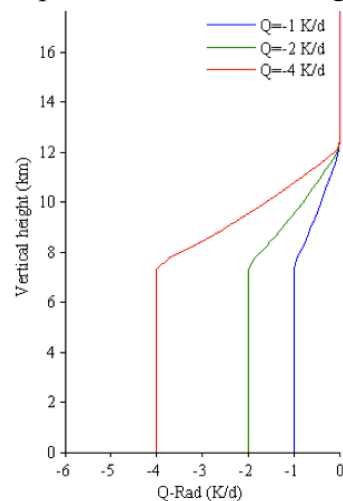
Cloud-resolving model SAM

- Anelastic momentum, continuity and scalar conservation equations
- Fixed SST, square doubly-periodic domain, no rotation [Khairoutdinov & Randall, JAS 2003]
- Run to statistical RCE (Radiative – Convective Equilibrium)

Clouds over near-surface temperature



Imposed radiative cooling rates

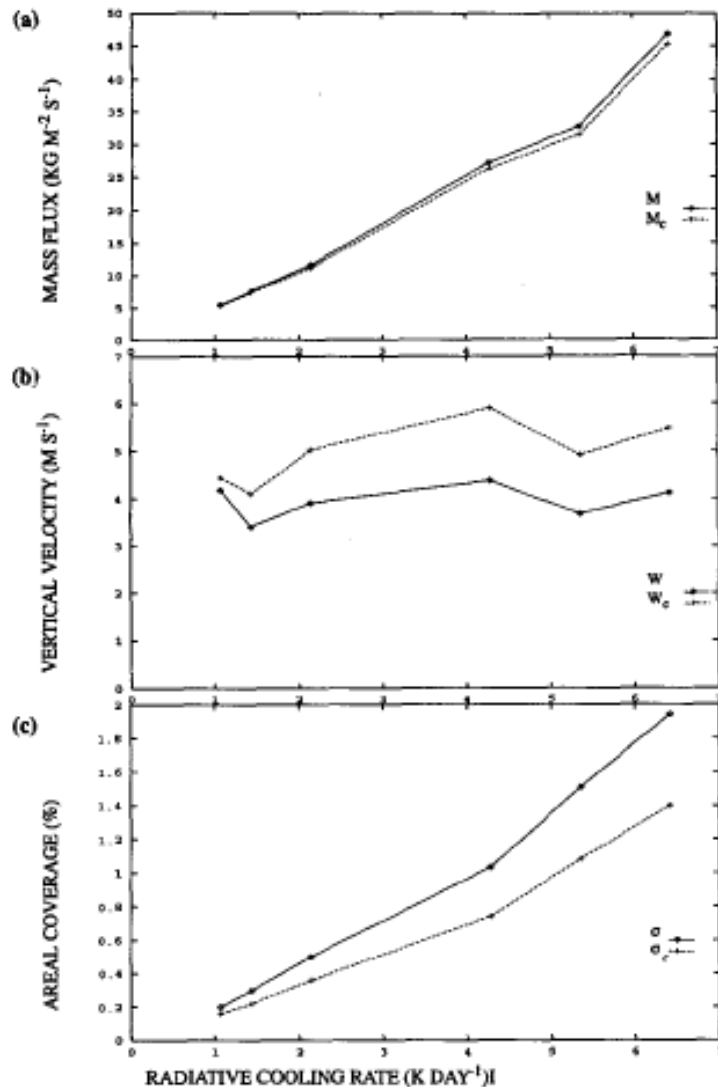


Definition of clouds $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} q_{\text{cld},2400\text{m}} > 5 \times 10^{-3} \text{ g/kg} \\ w_{2400\text{m}} > 1 \text{ m/s} \end{array} \right. \Rightarrow \text{Same results}$

[Cohen & Craig JAS 2006]

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

But pdf of cloud area/mass flux should be the same:



$$\text{Mass flux} \sim w_{\text{cld}} * A_{\text{cld}}$$

w_{cld}

A_{cld}

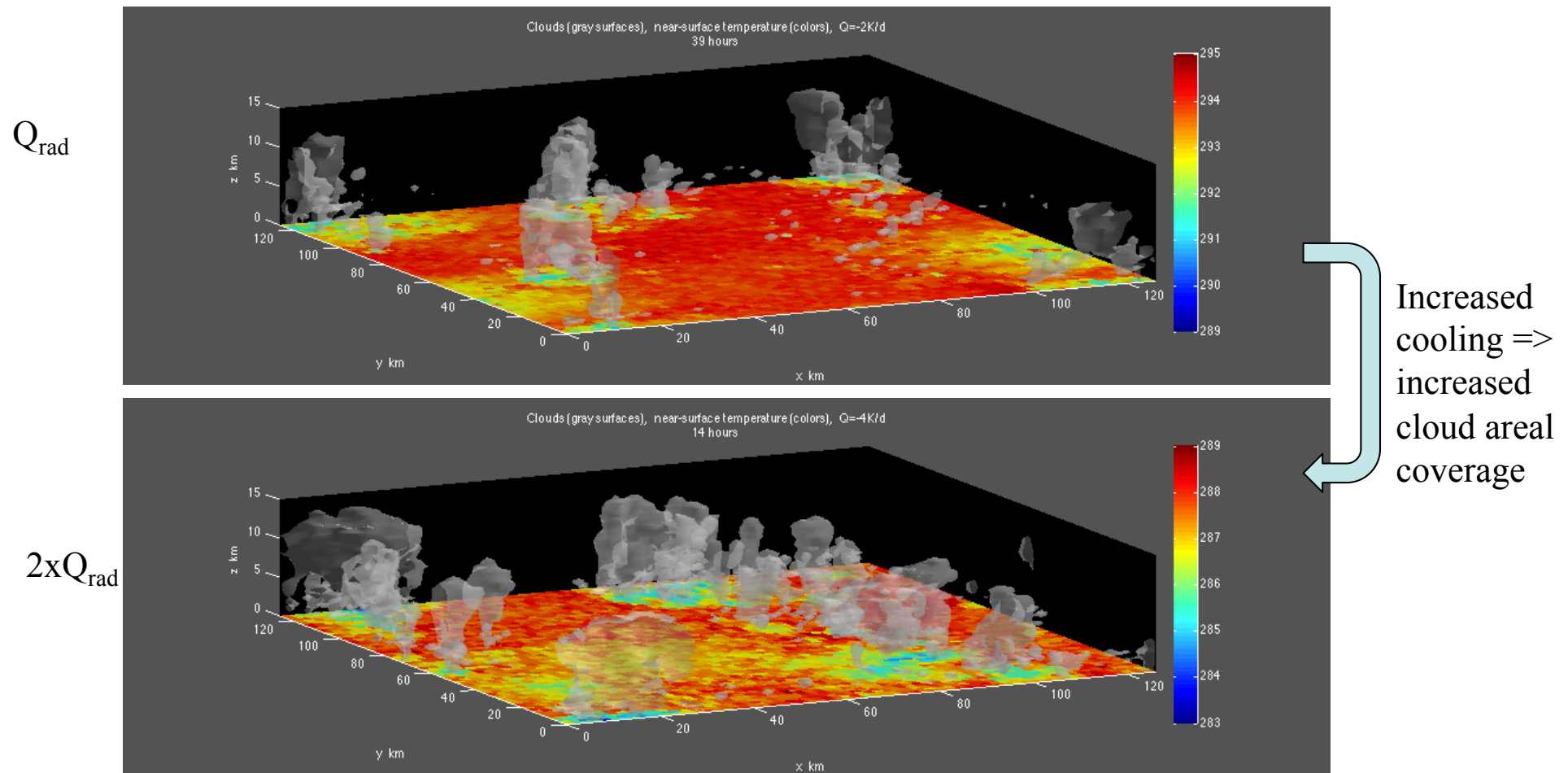
⇒ Increase in flux due to area increase

⇒ vertical velocities in updrafts ~ constant

⇒ Despite added cooling, atmosphere stays close to moist adiabat, CAPE ~ constant

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

But pdf of cloud area/mass flux should be the same:

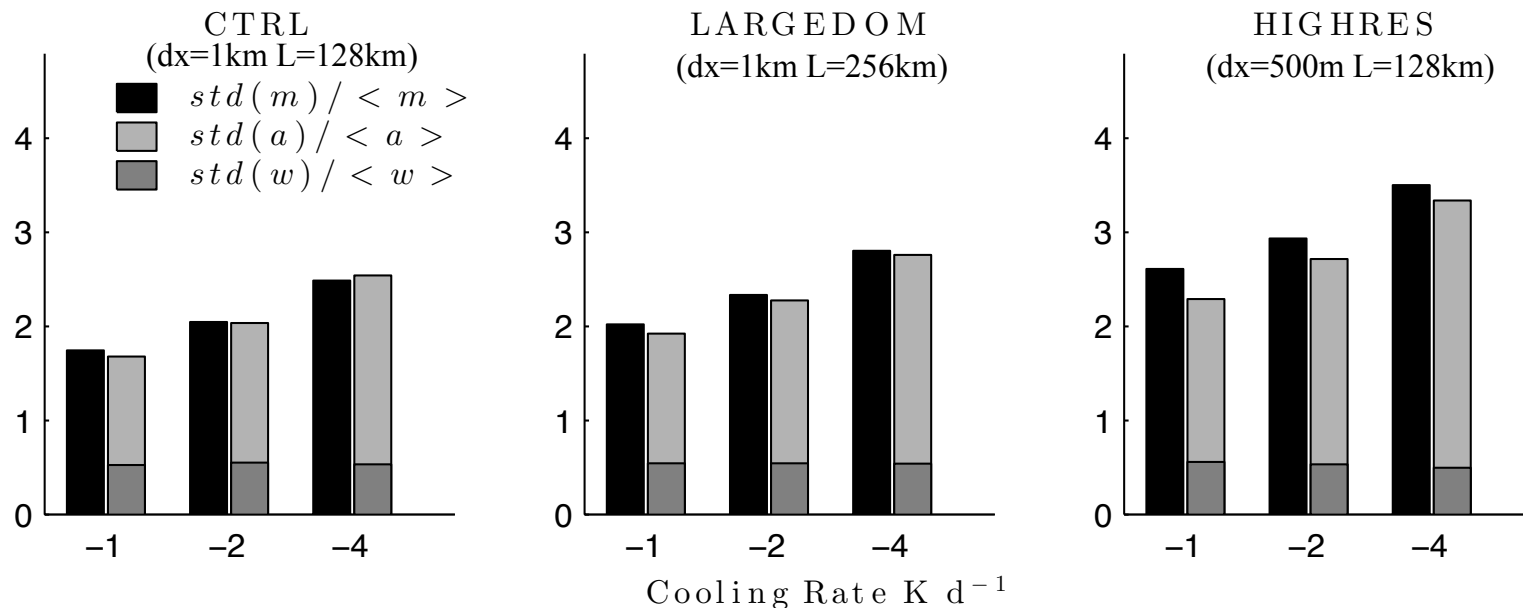


More cooling \Leftrightarrow more convective mass flux through increased convective area

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

But pdf of cloud area/mass flux should be the same:

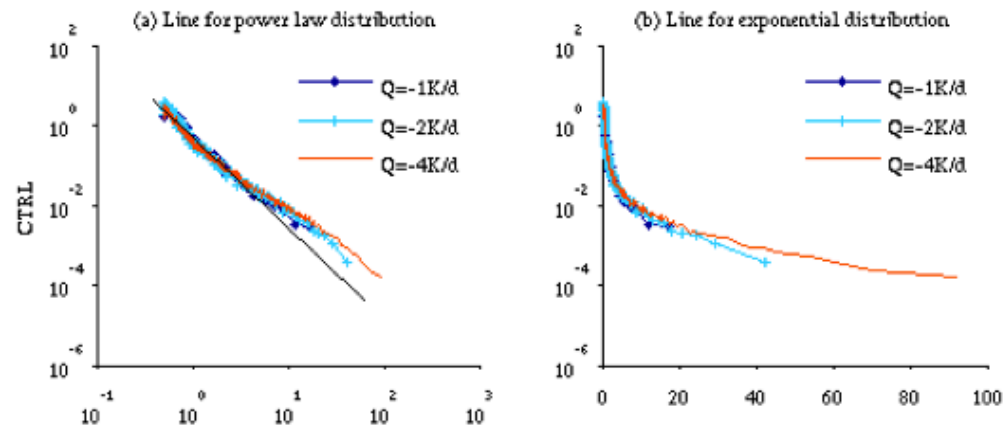
For each cloud i : $m_i = \rho a_i w_i$



=> Variability of $w \ll$ variability of either a or m

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

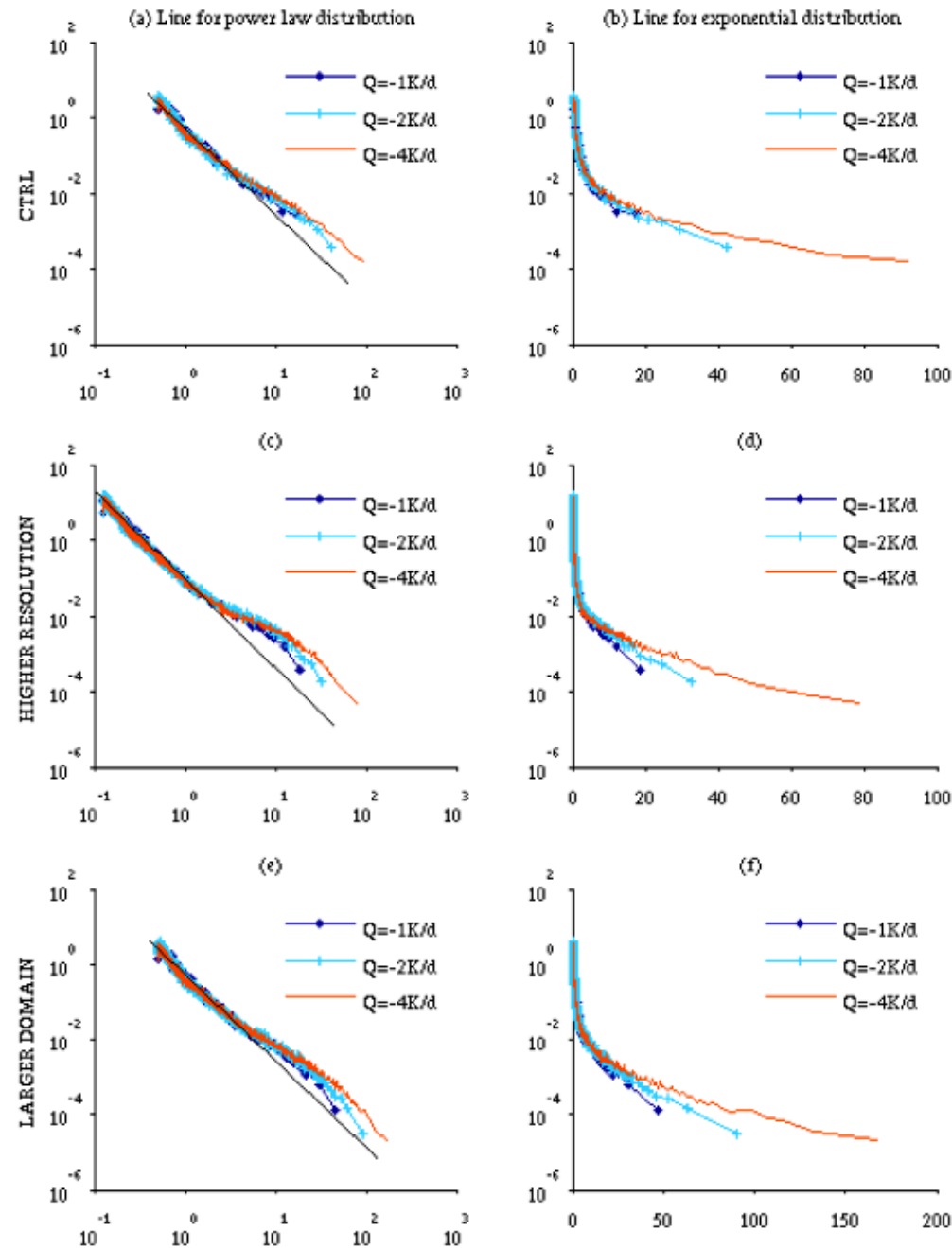
Probability distribution function of cloud mass flux (Kg/s)



⇒ Power law
with exponential tail

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Probability distribution function of cloud mass flux (Kg/s)



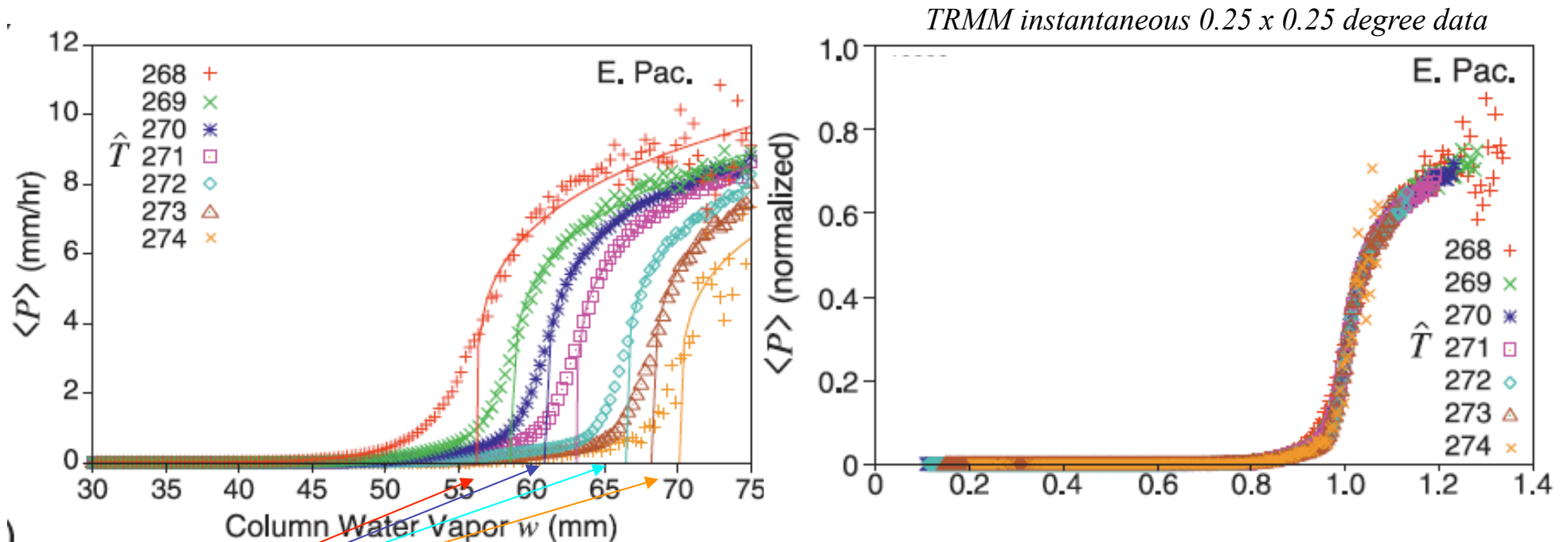
⇒ Power law
with exponential tail

Why power law?...

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Deep convection = critical phenomenon ?

Universal moisture-precipitation relationship (depends on temperature)



w_c dependence on T does NOT match WV_{SAT}
Actually matches lower tropospheric $WV_{LT,SAT}$

[Peters & Neelin Nature Phys 2006
Neelin, Peters & Hales JAS 2009]

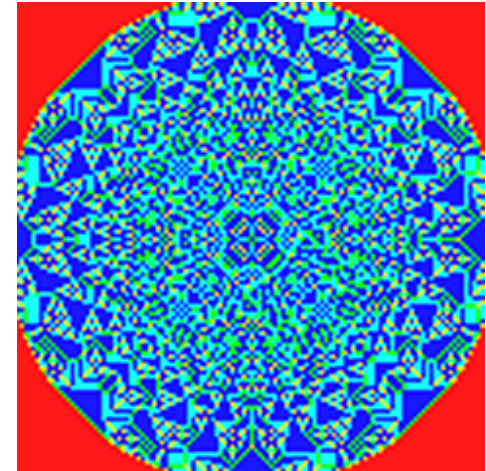
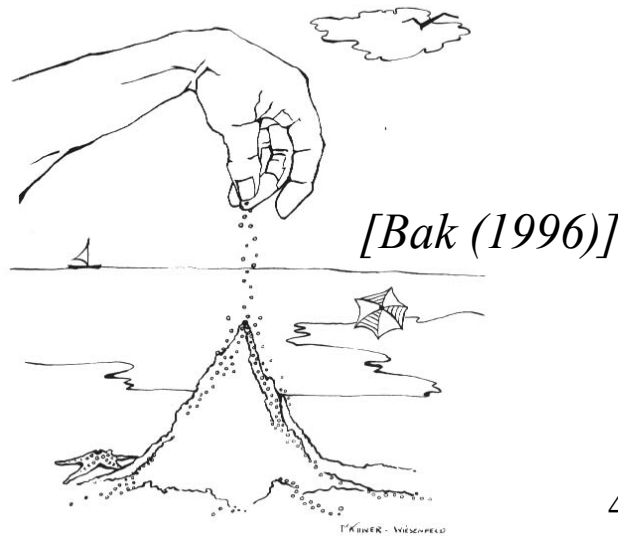
Theory:

Convection is an instance of **SOC (self-organized criticality)**

Precipitation (order parameter) critical wrt water vapor (tuning parameter)

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Self-Organized criticality



40000 grains dropped on center of
120x120 lattice, $z_c=4$

Open boundaries + add sand

⇒ periodic avalanches occur, the size of which follow a power law

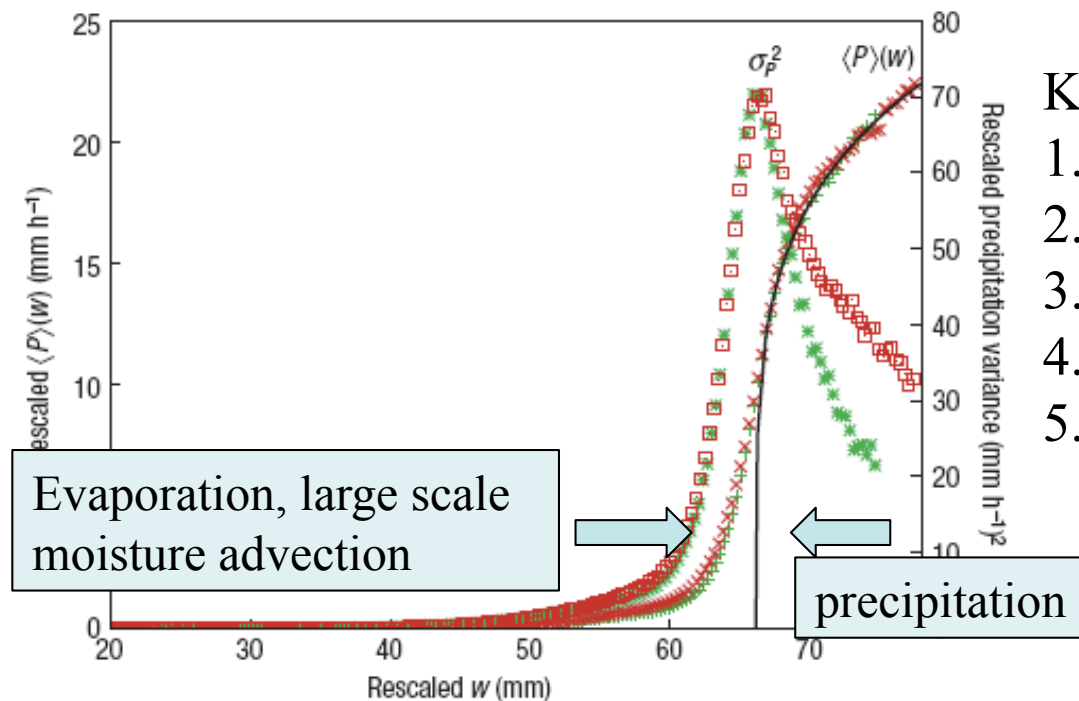
scale free, long-range correlation

⇒ attracted to its critical state: slope approaches the critical slope

NO tuning parameter (unlike eg temperature for phase transition)

⇒ criticality is “self-organized”

Radiative Convective Equilibrium



Key features supporting interpretation:

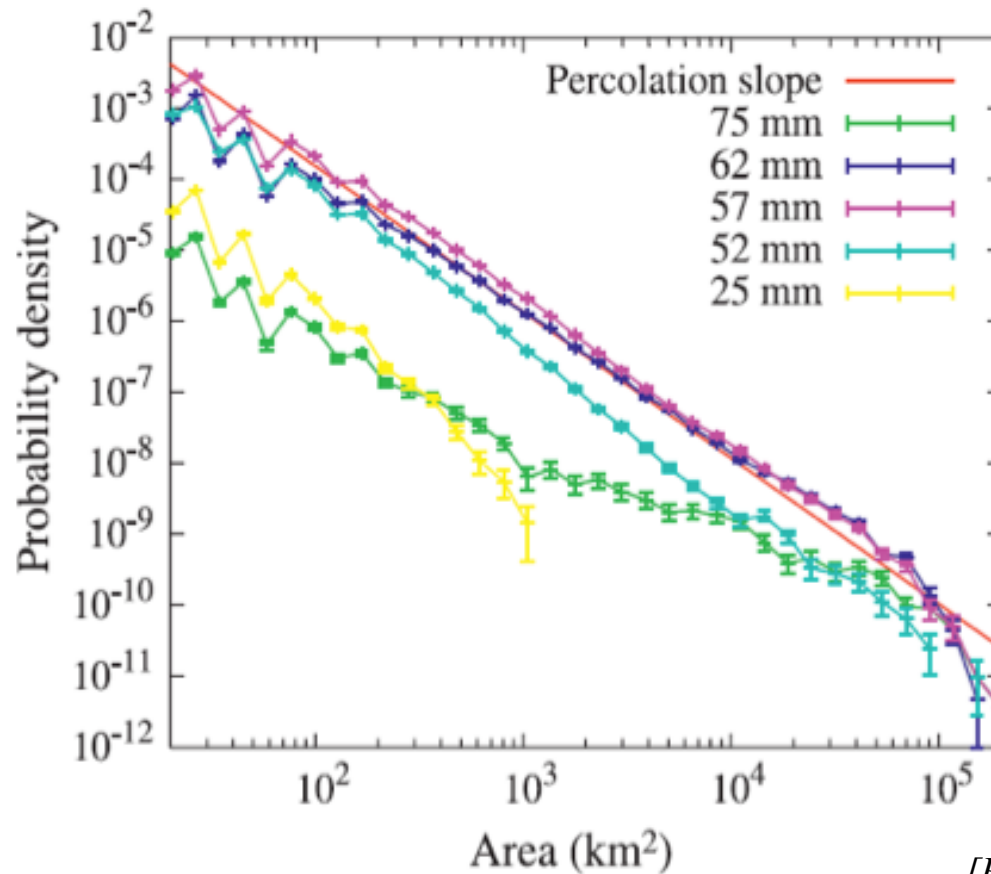
1. universal relationship
2. power-law fit
3. max variance near “critical point”
4. Scale free behavior (hard to test)
5. consistency w/QE postulate

“...the attractive QE (quasi-equilibrium) state... is the critical point of a continuous phase transition and **is thus an instance of SOC (self-organized criticality)**”

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

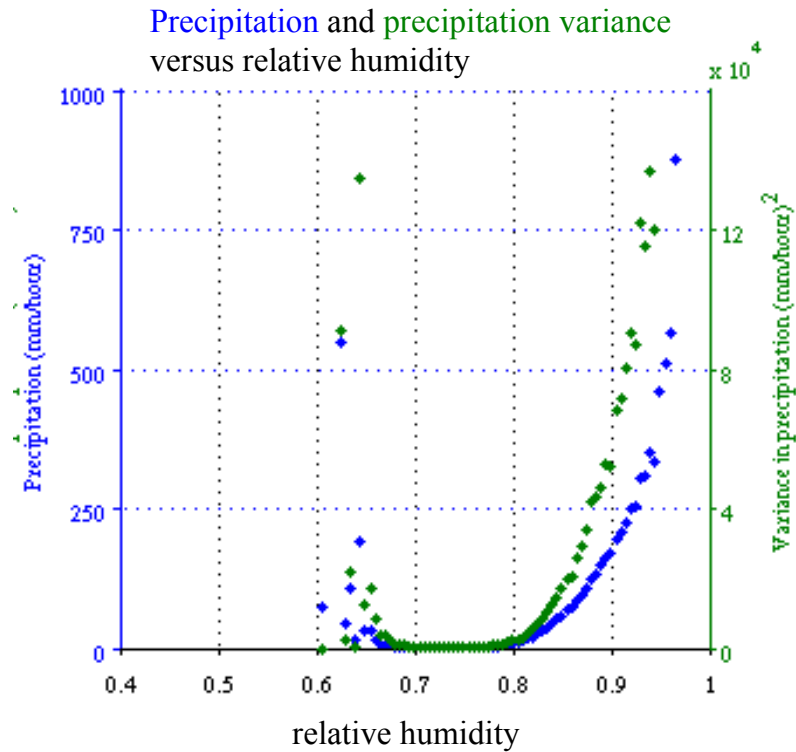
⇒ pdf of cluster size (clouds) follows a power law

⇒ 2D percolation exponent = $-187/91 \approx -2.05$



[Peters, Neelin and Nesbitt, JAS 2009]

Radiative Convective Equilibrium



⇒ pickup of precip, but no leveling off at highest humidities

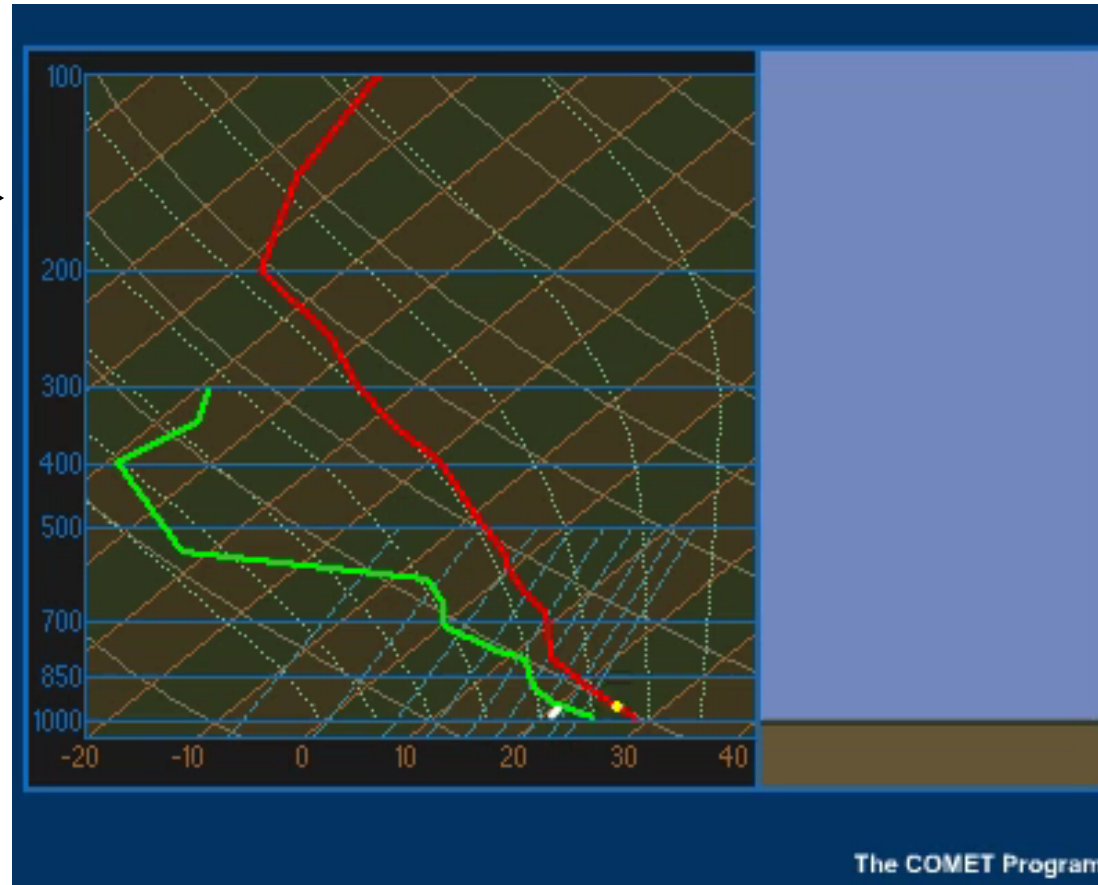
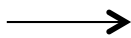
⇒ no max in variance

Radiative Convective Equilibrium

Moist convection

Parcel = yellow dot

EL equilibrium
level



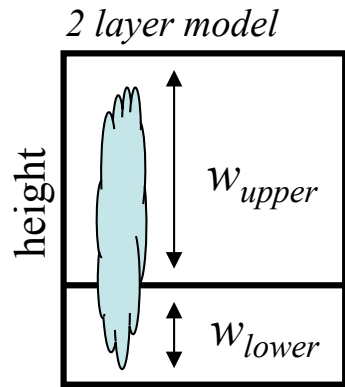
LFC level of free
convection

CAPE: convective available potential energy

Instability dictates onset of convection

⇒ If critical, should be w.r.t. subcloud layer humidity
(dominates CAPE variance)

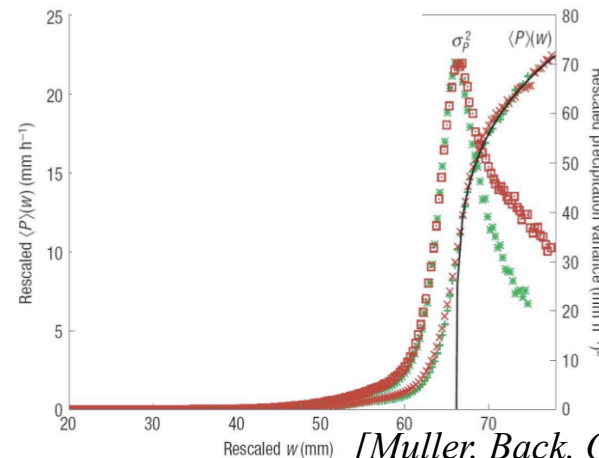
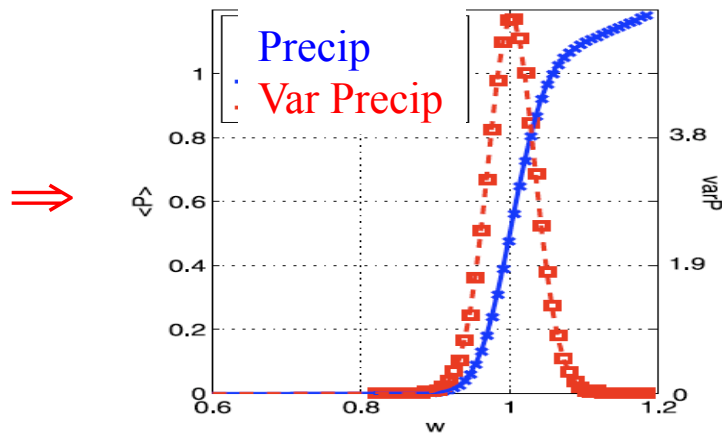
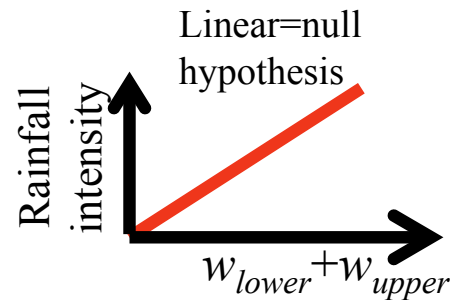
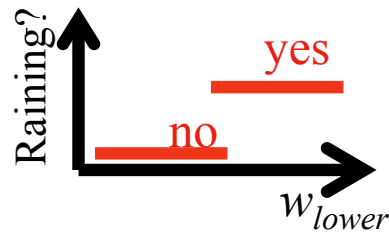
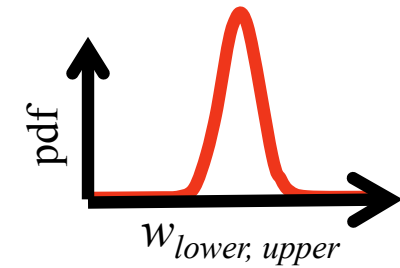
Radiative Convective Equilibrium



Free tropospheric water vapor

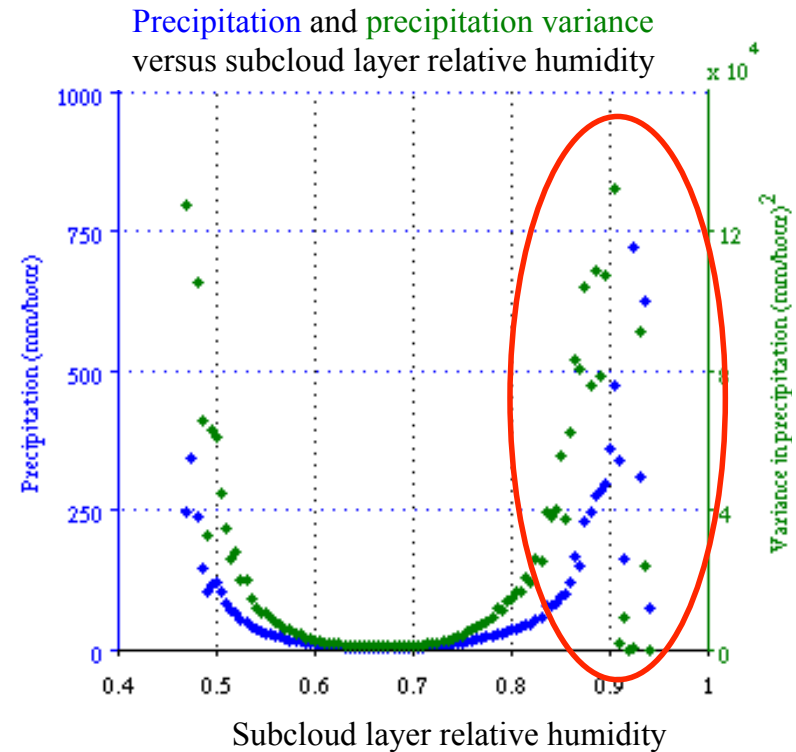
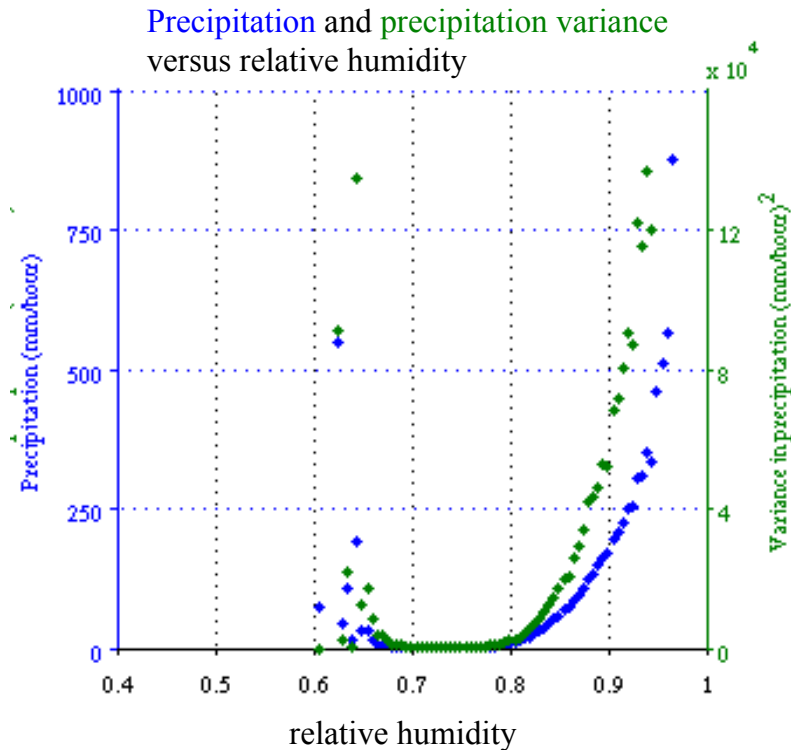
Subcloud layer water vapor

independent random
variables normally
distributed



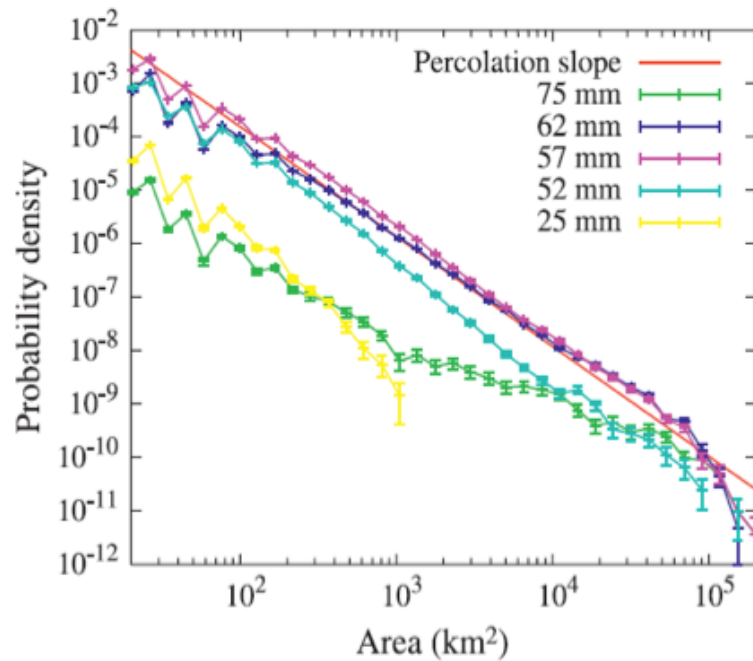
[Muller, Back, O’Gorman, Emanuel, GRL09]

Radiative Convective Equilibrium



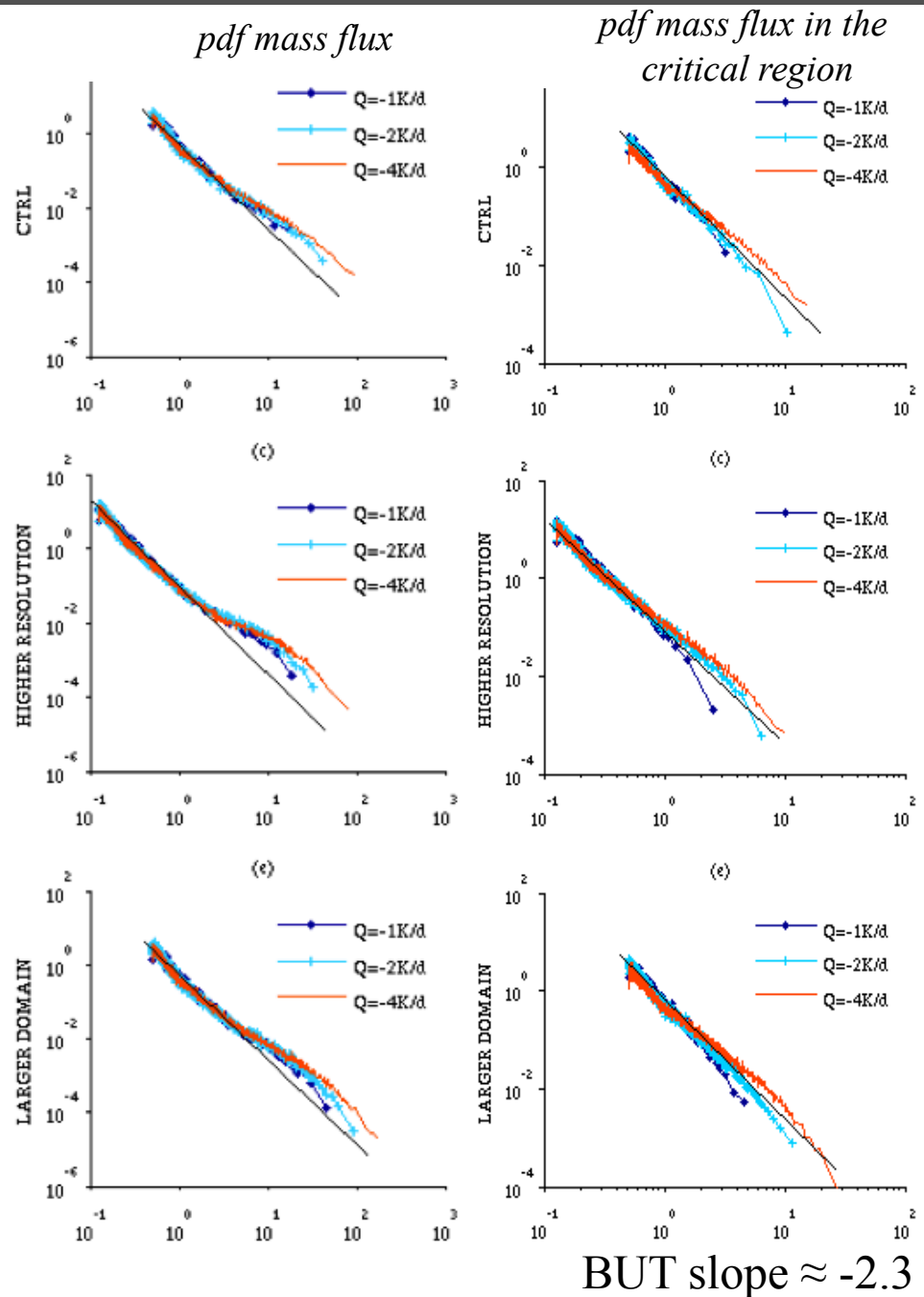
- ⇒ sharper pickup
- ⇒ increase in scatter above criticality, instead of the saturation of precipitation rates [as in Posselt, Van den Heever, Stephens, Igel, J Clim 2012]
- ⇒ seems to be a peak in variance near criticality
- ⇒ However, noise and scatter above critical humidity => difficult to identify a unique variance maximum

Radiative Convective Equilibrium



[Peters, Neelin and Nesbitt, JAS 2009]

- ⇒ pdf of cluster size follows a power law
- ⇒ 2D percolation exponent = $-187/91 \approx -2.05$



Radiative Convective Equilibrium

SUMMARY PART 2: RADIATIVE – CONVECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

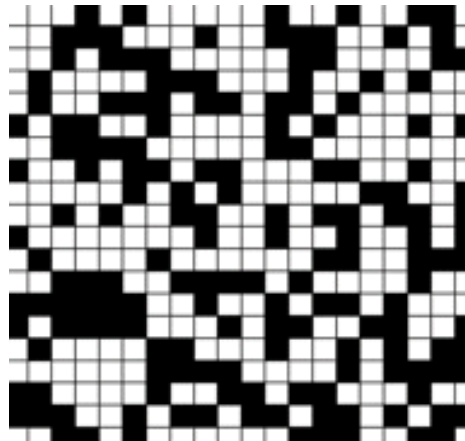
⇒ In « pop-corn » convection, the spatial distribution of deep clouds (pdf of cloud **mass flux** or cloud **area**) follows a **power law**

⇒ Broadly consistent with deep convection being critical phenomenon [Neelin & Peters *Nature Phys* 06], albeit departures :

- if critical, should be wrt low-level humidity (measures instability)

[Muller, Back, O’Gorman, Emanuel, GRL 2009]

Physical picture :



At each site, probability to have a cloud

$$P_{\text{cloud}} = P\{w_{\text{lower}} > w_{\text{lower,crit}}\}$$

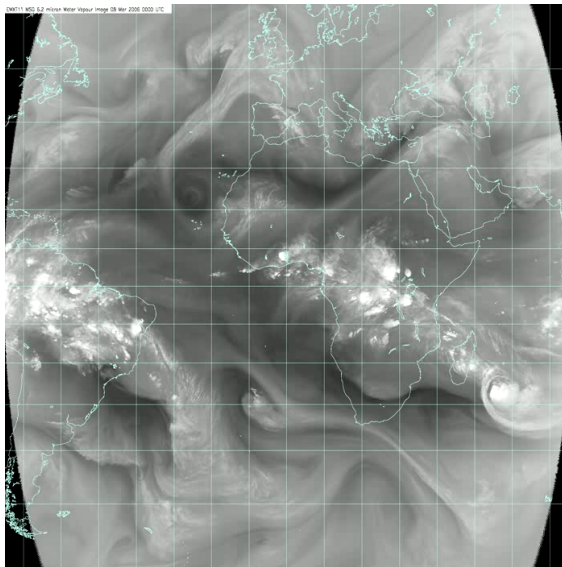
- critical exponent (-2.3) close but consistently steeper than the 2D percolation exponent (-2.05) : largest clouds less likely than expected from theory. Possibly because:
 - Neglected entrainment
 - Neglected reevaporation of rain & downdrafts
- } ⇒ Negative feedback on deep convective clouds

[Raja & Muller, QJRMMS in prep 2015]

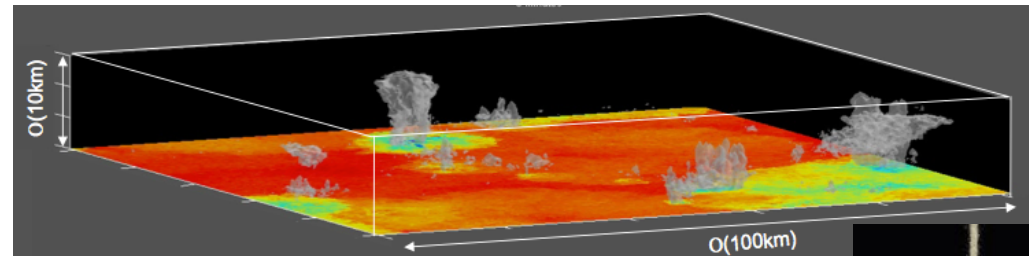
Outline

- Clouds in the climate system
- Spatial distribution of tropical deep convection

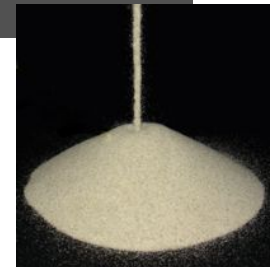
*Water vapor
from satellite*



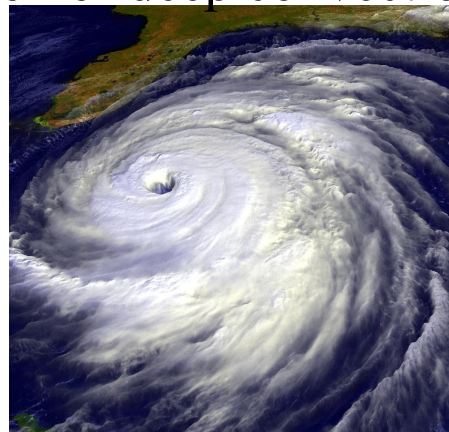
*Radiative-convective equilibrium
Clouds over surface temperature*



Tropical « pop corn » convection



- Spontaneous organization of deep convection

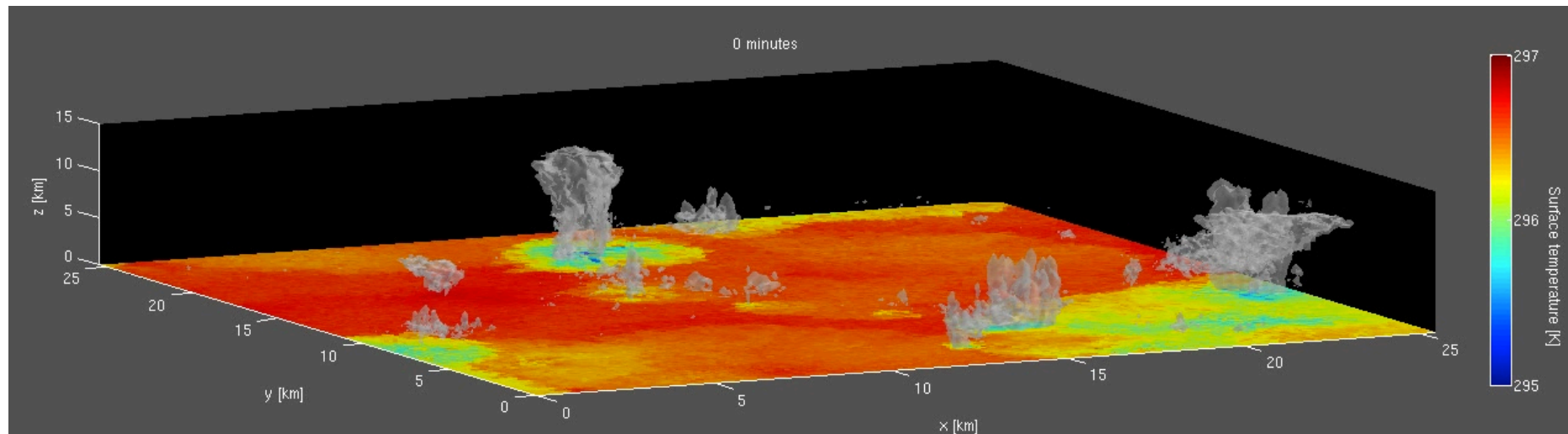


[Raymond, Zeng QJRM 2000;
Bretherton, Blossey, Khairoutdinov, JAS 2005;
Sobel, Bellon, Bacmeister GRL 2007;
Muller, Held, JAS 2012;
Tobin, Bony, Roca, J Clim 2012;
Emanuel, Wing, Vincent JAMES 2013;
Craig and Mack, JGR, 2013;
Jeevanjee, Romps, GRL 2013;
Khairoutdinov, Emanuel, JAMES 2013;
Shi, Bretherton JAMES 2014;
Bony et al, Nature Geoscience 2015]

Self-Aggregation

Radiative Convective Equilibrium (RCE)

Clouds over near-surface temperature

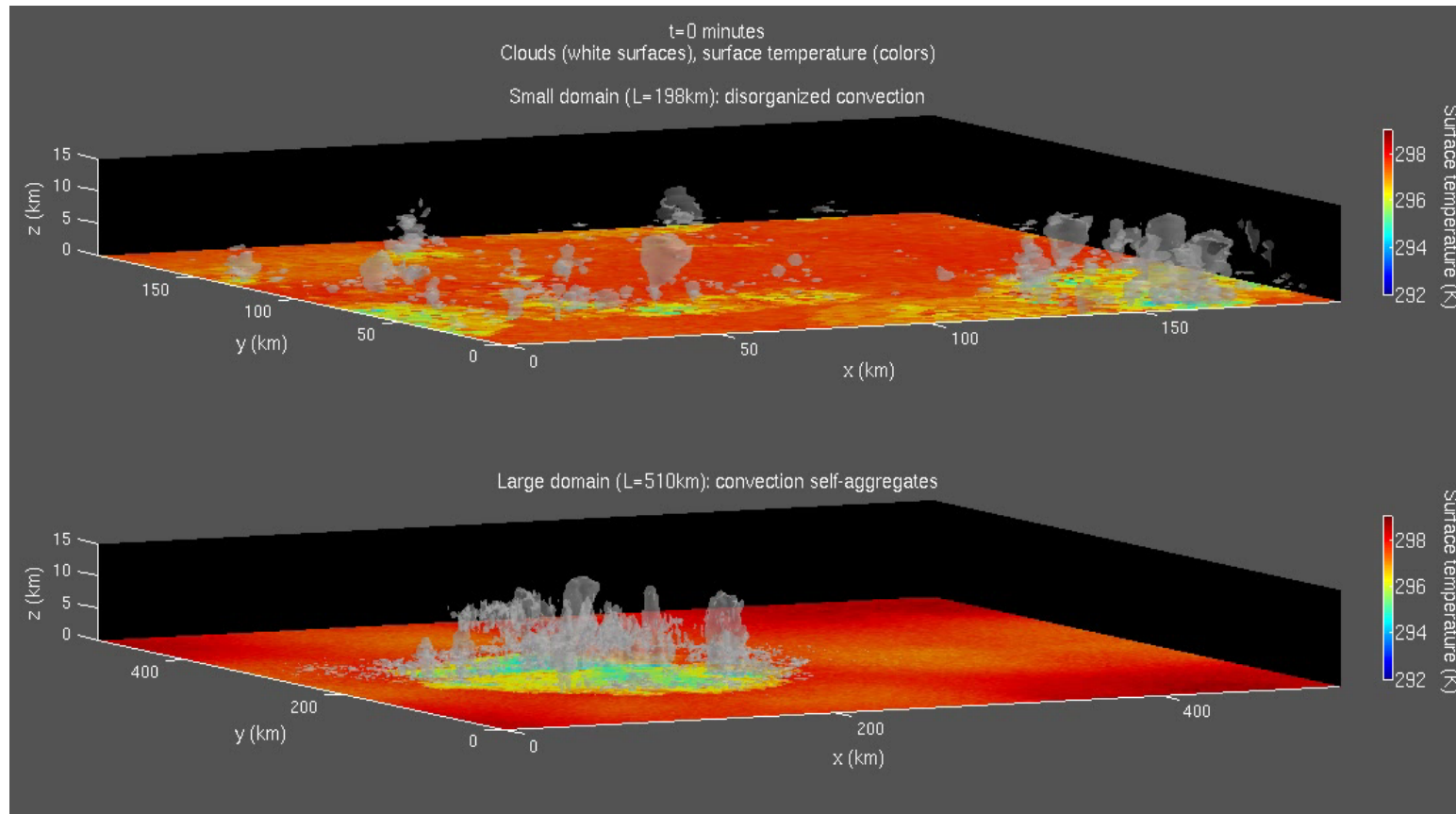


Self-aggregation = instability of disorganized RCE “pop corn” state

[Raymond, Zeng QJRM 2000; Bretherton, Blossey, Khairoutdinov, JAS 2005; Sobel, Bellon, Bacmeister GRL 2007; Muller, Held, JAS 2012; Tobin, Bony, Roca, J Clim 2012; Emanuel, Wing, Vincent JAMES 2013; Craig and Mack, JGR, 2013; Jeevanjee, Romps, GRL 2013; Khairoutdinov, Emanuel, JAMES 2013; Shi, Bretherton JAMES 2014; Bony et al, Nature Geoscience 2015]

Self-Aggregation

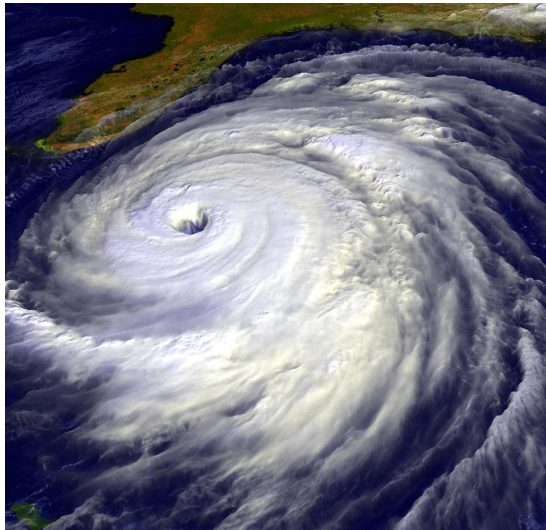
Clouds over near-surface temperature



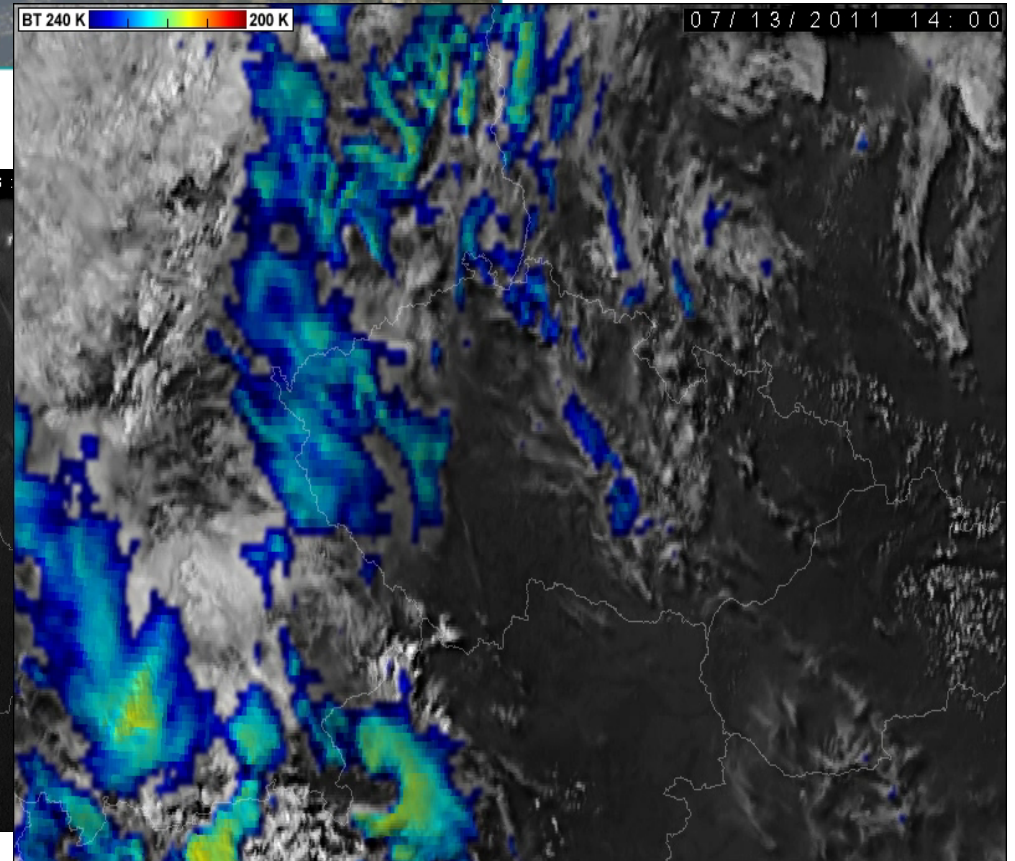
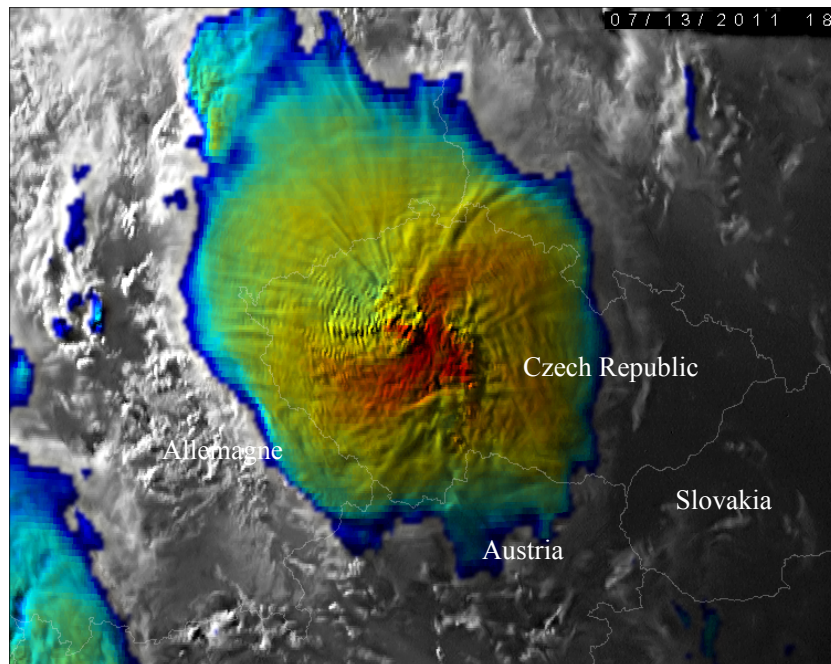
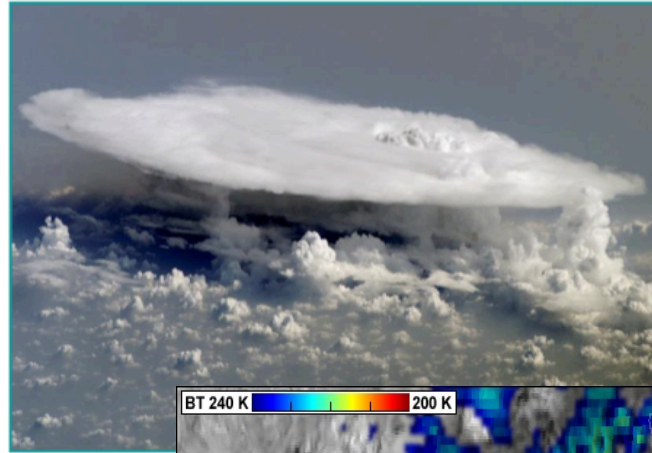
Larger
domain
=> convection
aggregates

Self Aggregation: why do we care?

Hurricane Floyd



Mesoscale convective systems

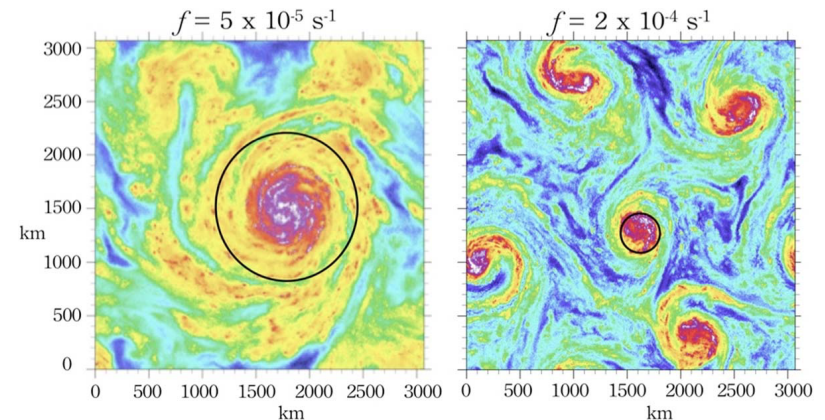


Self Aggregation: why do we care?

Feedback responsible for self-aggregation - **Role in cyclogenesis** ?

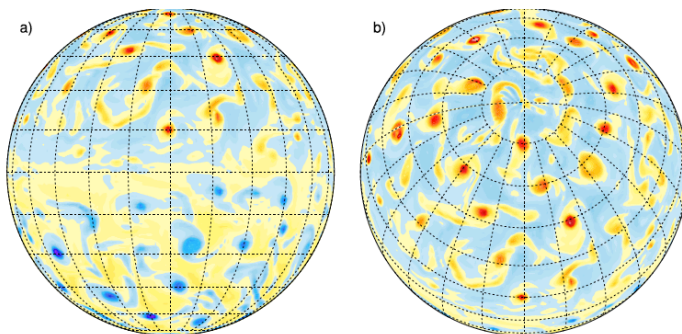
Add rotation => tropical cyclones « TC World »

Precipitable water PW (= vertically integrated water vapor)

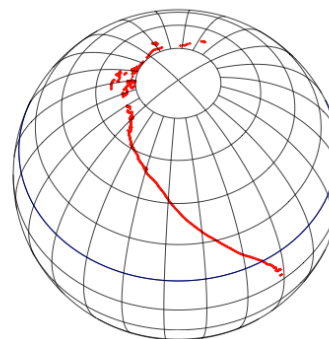


[Bretherton, Blossey, Khairoutdinov, JAS 2005;
Khairoutdinov and Emanuel, JAMES 2013]

Relative vorticity at 850 hPa



trajectory of vortices



[Shi and Bretherton, JAMES 2014]

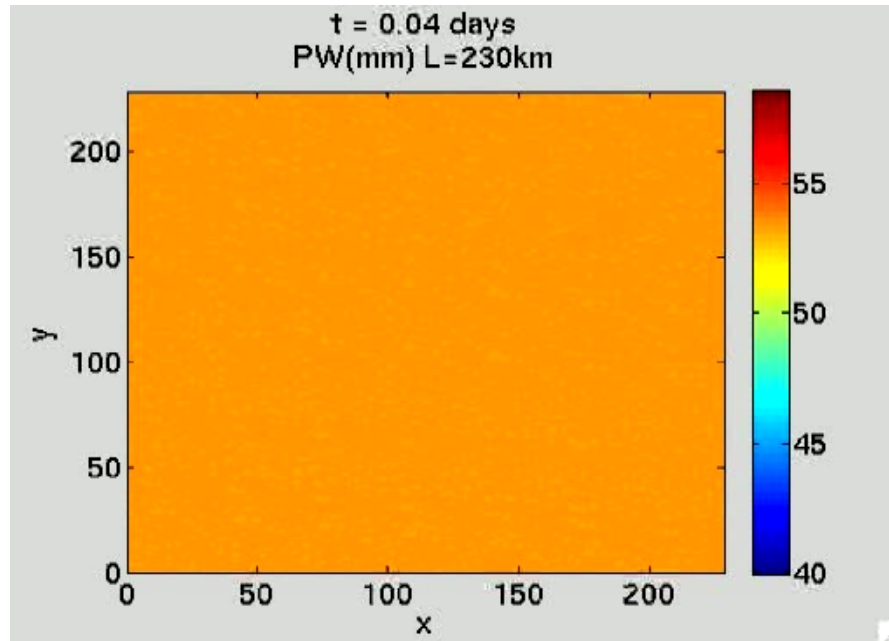
Self-aggregation of convection - Role in MJO ?

[Tobin et al, JAMES 2013
Yang and Ingersoll, JAS 2013]

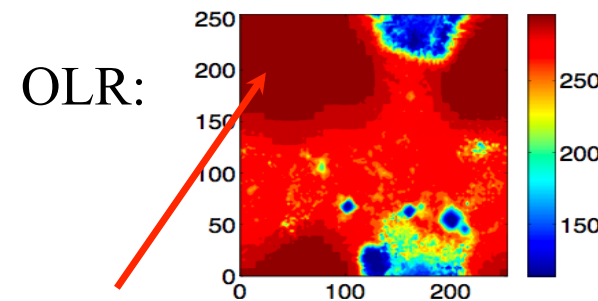
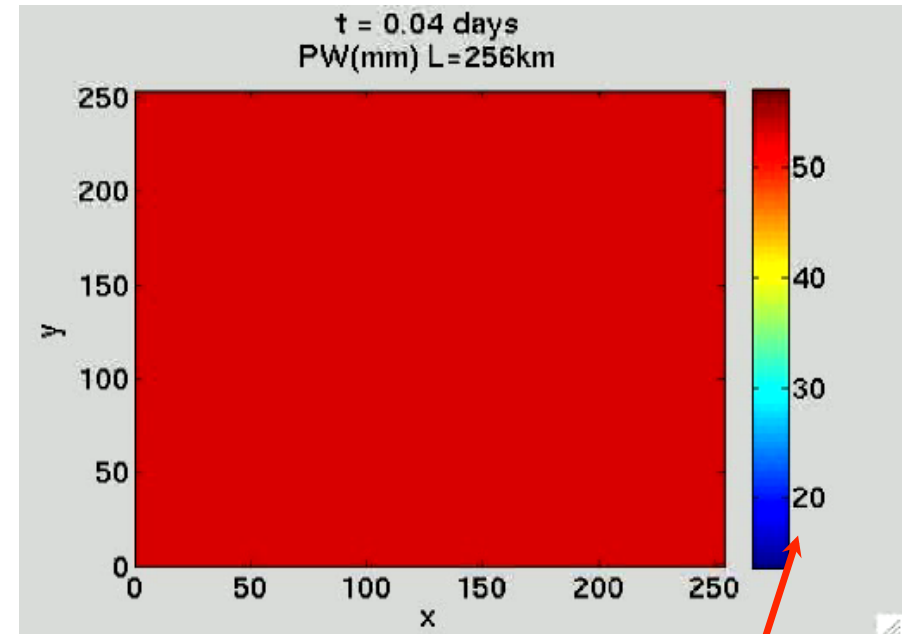
Self Aggregation: why do we care?

Top view of precipitable water PW (= vertically integrated water vapor)

230km



256km



⇒ Thermodynamic and radiative properties dramatically affected

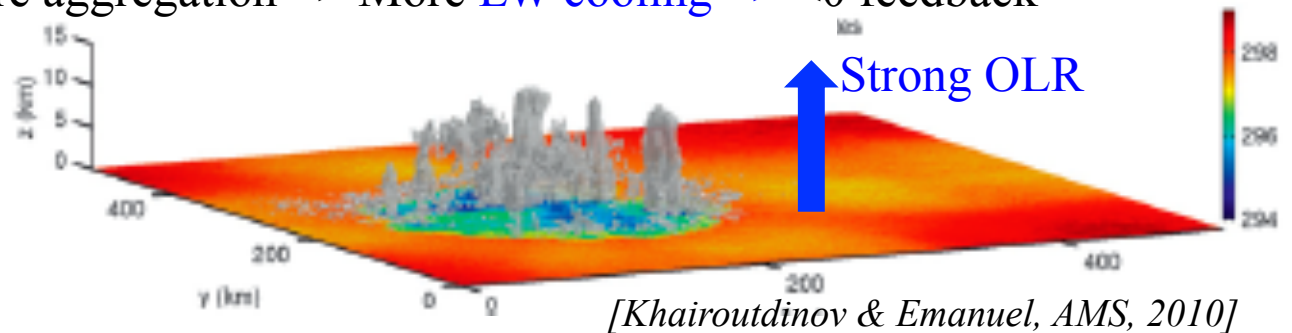
Self Aggregation: why do we care?

Sensitive to temperature : favored at warm and cold T.

[Emanuel, Wing, Vincent, JAMES 2013
Abbot J. Clim. 2014]

Self-aggregation regulates tropical climate?

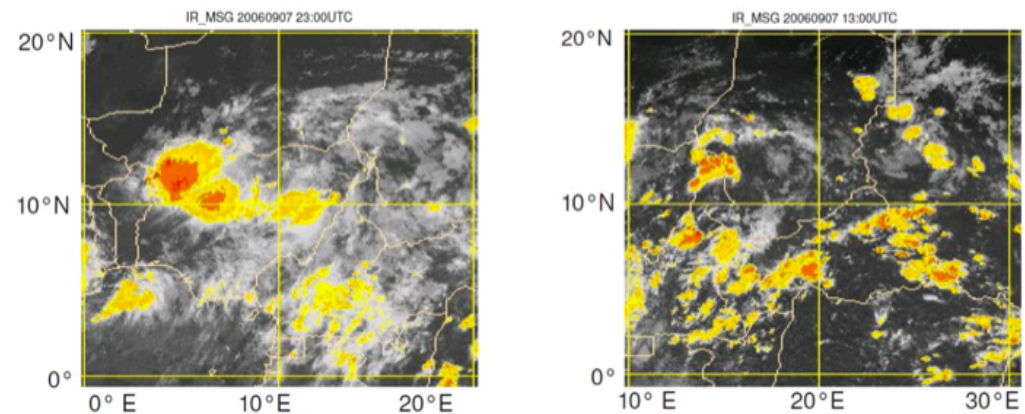
Warmer temperatures => More aggregation => More LW cooling => <0 feedback



Radiative impact poorly understood.

Observations suggest that SW warming may partly compensate LW cooling

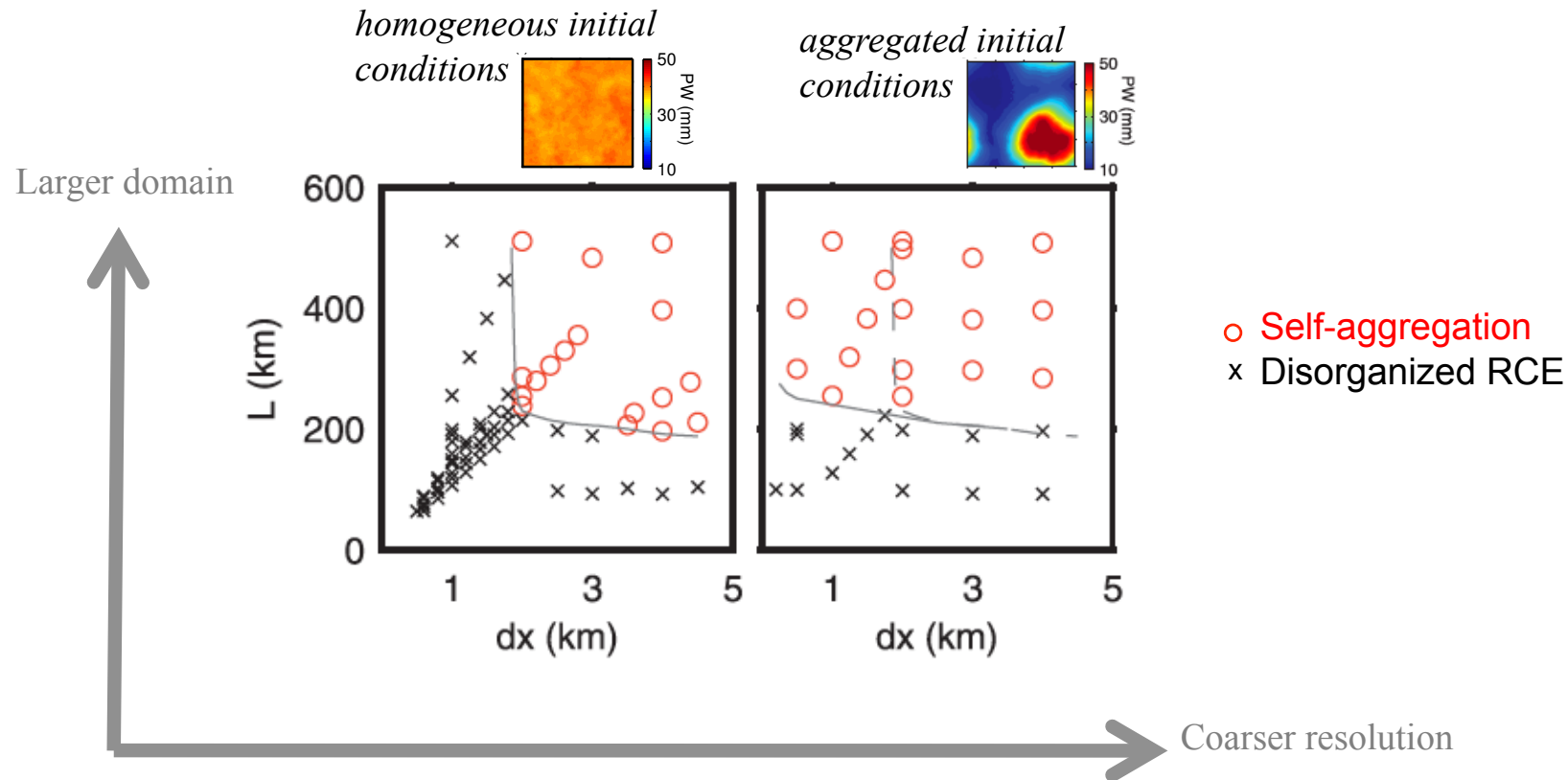
Still true at warmer T?



[Tobin, Bony, Roca, J.Clim 2012
Tobin et al, JAMES 2013]

Self-Aggregation: what we know

Hysteresis [*Khairoutdinov & Emanuel, AMS, 2010*]



Favored by { large domains
coarse resolution for onset

Self-Aggregation: what we know

Literature confusing...

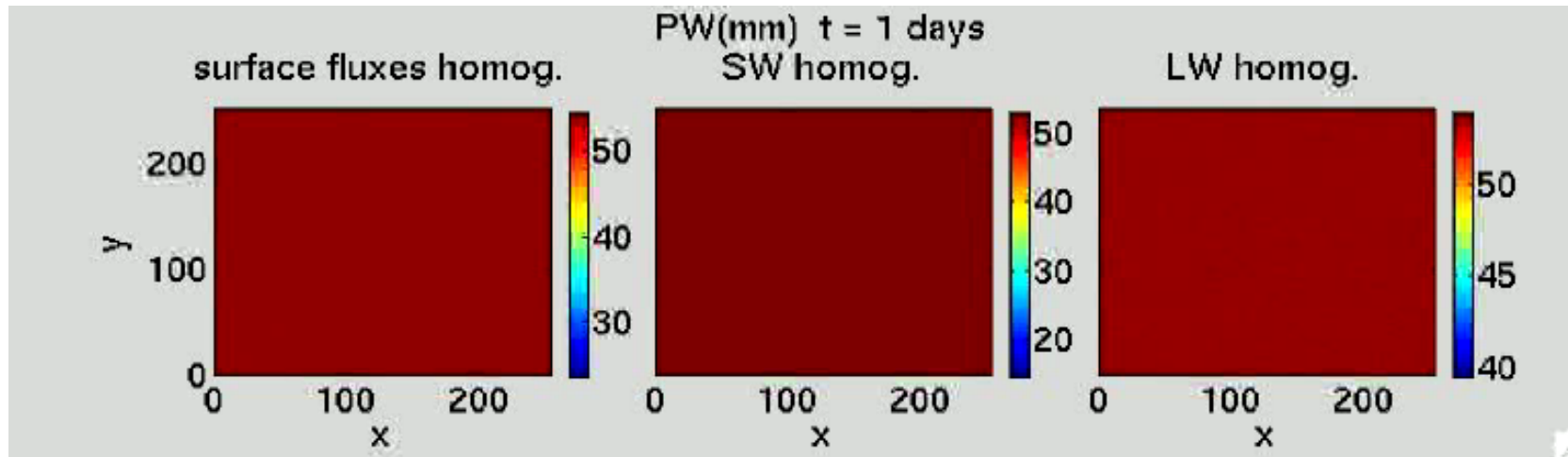
- **Cloud radiative** processes, in particular in the longwave, have been shown to play a crucial role in the self-aggregation of convection. *[Muller, Held, JAS 2012]*
- **Clear sky radiation** has also been identified as a key ingredient in theoretical models of self-aggregation. *[Emanuel, Wing, Vincent JAMES 2013]*
- **Cold pools** have been shown to impact the aggregation as well. *[Jeevanjee, Romps, GRL 2013]*

Our question: What aspect of each physical process matters for aggregation?

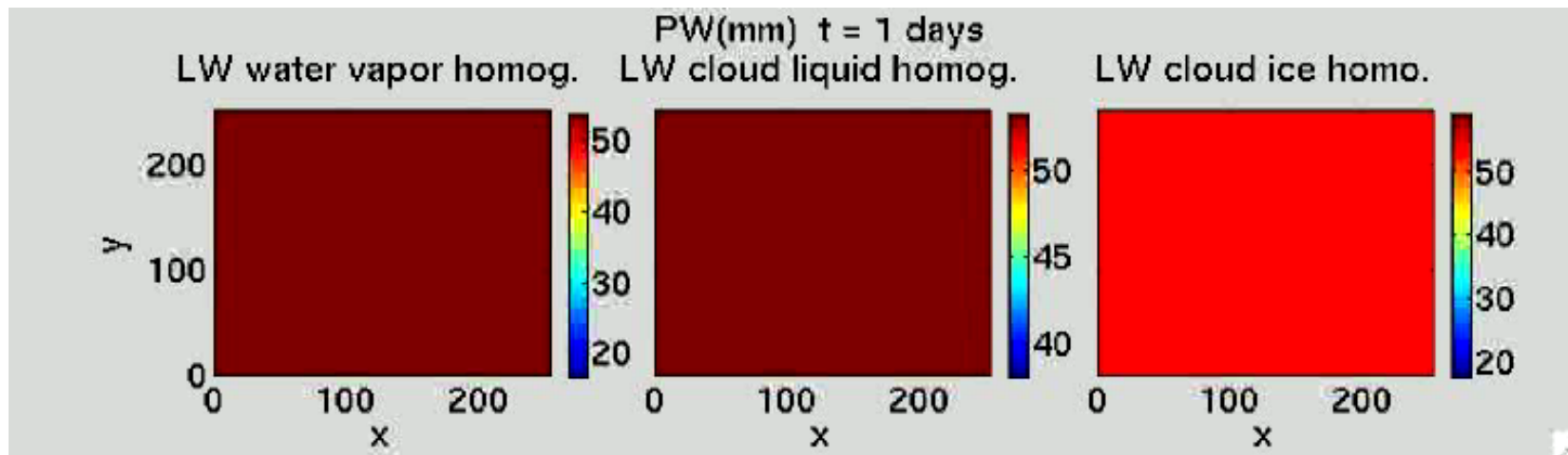
We address this question with idealized experiments



Self-Aggregation: low cloud LW



⇒ LW interactive radiation crucial

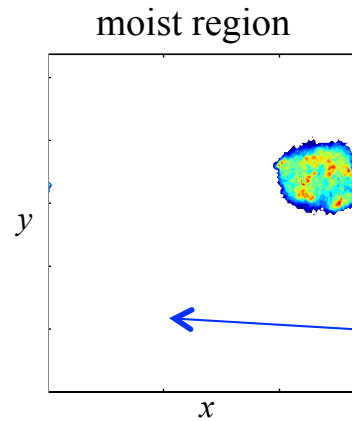
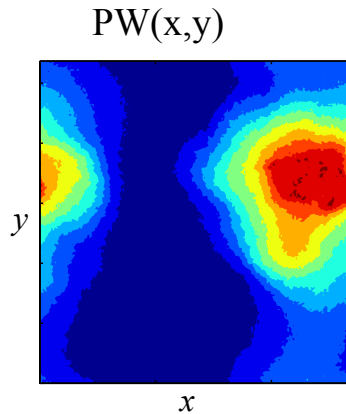


⇒ low cloud LW radiation crucial

What features of the interactive radiation are crucial?

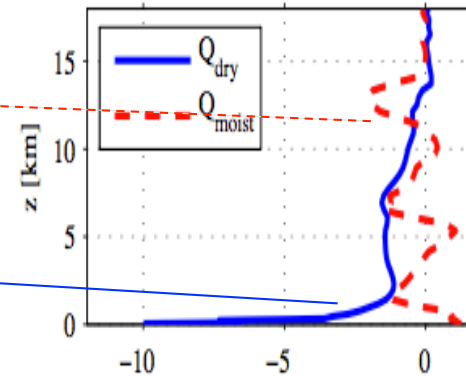
Self-Aggregation: low cloud LW

Interactive radiation

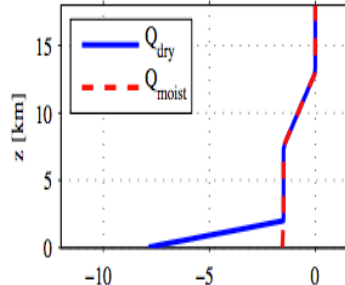
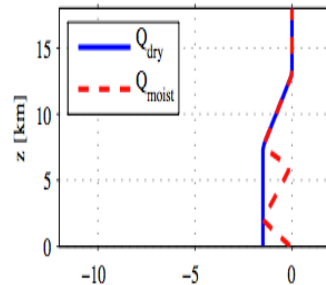
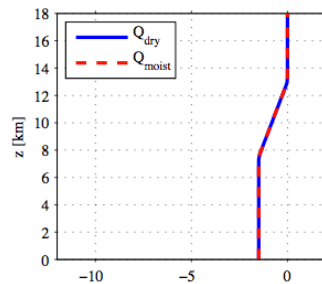


Radiative cooling profiles (K/day)

in and out moist region



Imposed radiation

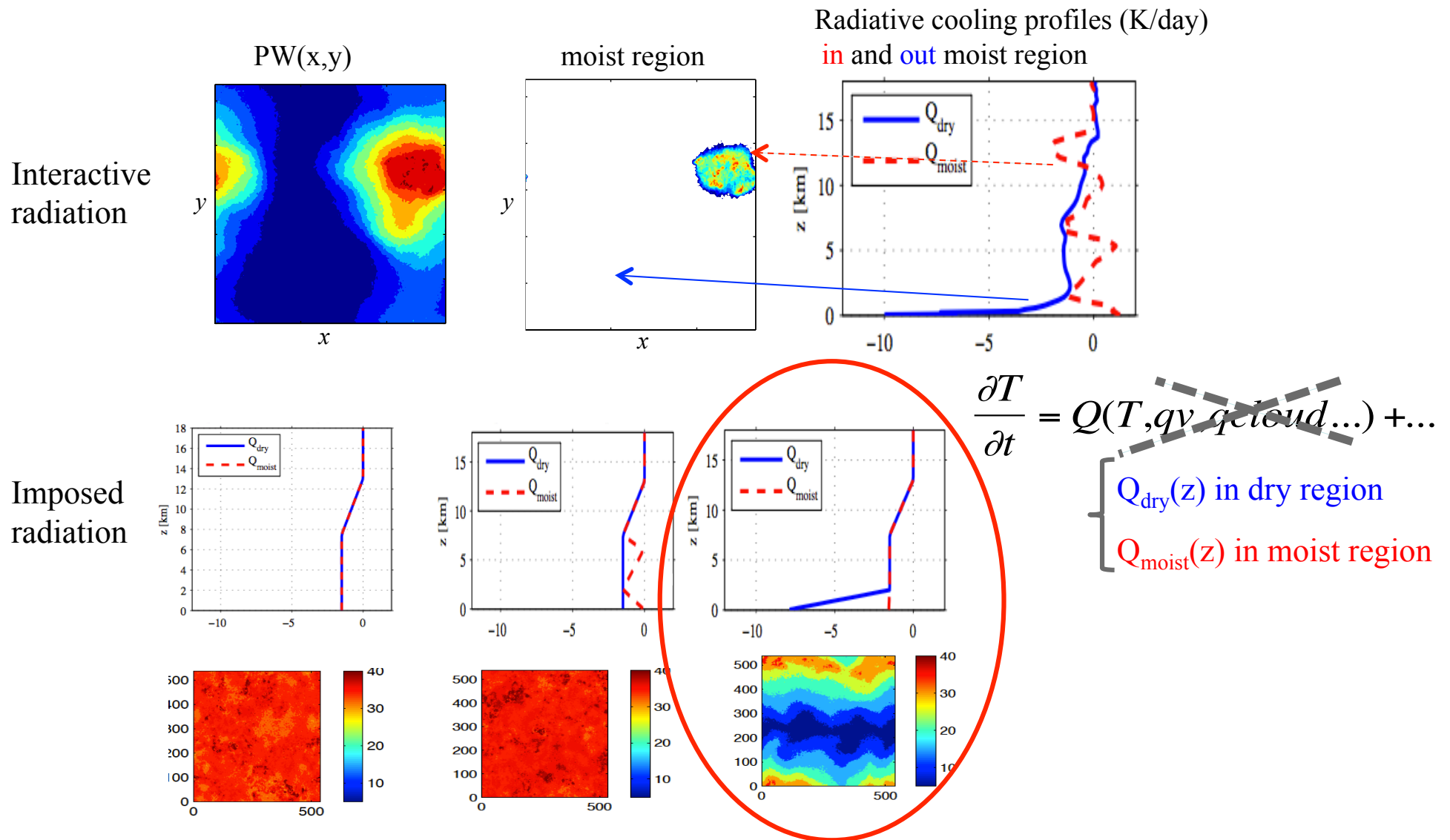


$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = Q(T, qv, \cancel{q_{cloud}} \dots) + \dots$$

$Q_{\text{dry}}(z)$ in dry region

$Q_{\text{moist}}(z)$ in moist region

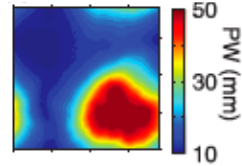
Self-Aggregation: low cloud LW



⇒ Variability in low level cooling causes spontaneous aggregation of convection

Self-Aggregation: high cloud LW

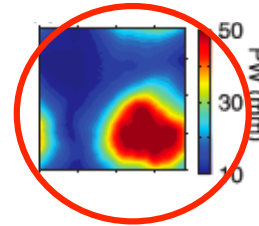
beginning of simulation



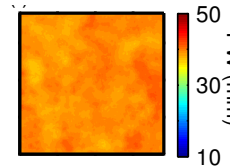
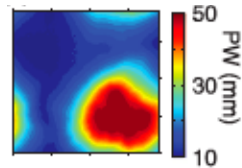
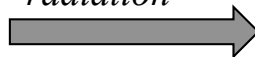
*no low cloud
radiation*



end of simulation



*no low cloud
no high cloud
radiation*

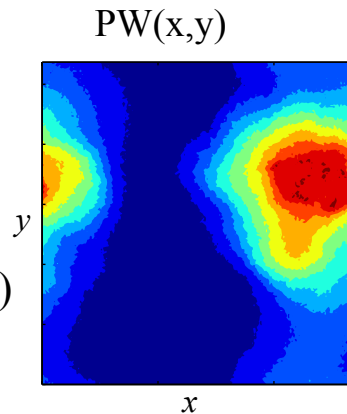


⇒ high cloud + clear sky radiation can also maintain aggregation

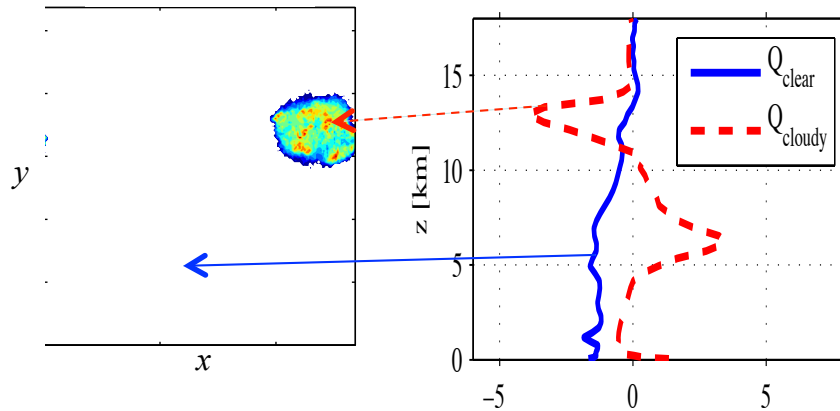
What features of the interactive radiation are crucial?

Self-Aggregation: high cloud LW

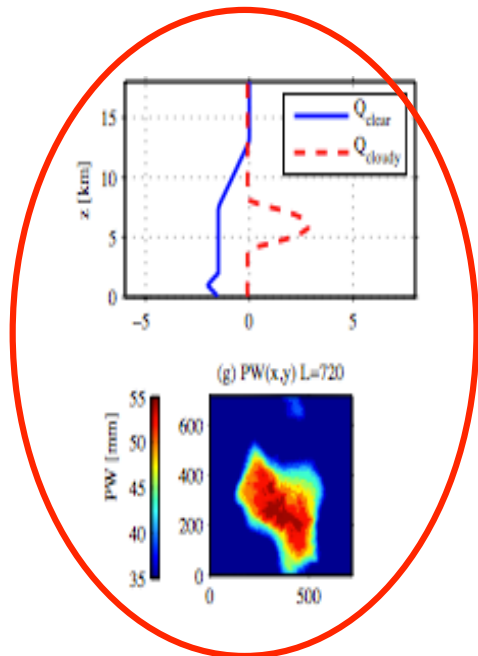
Interactive
radiation
(not low clouds)



High clouds

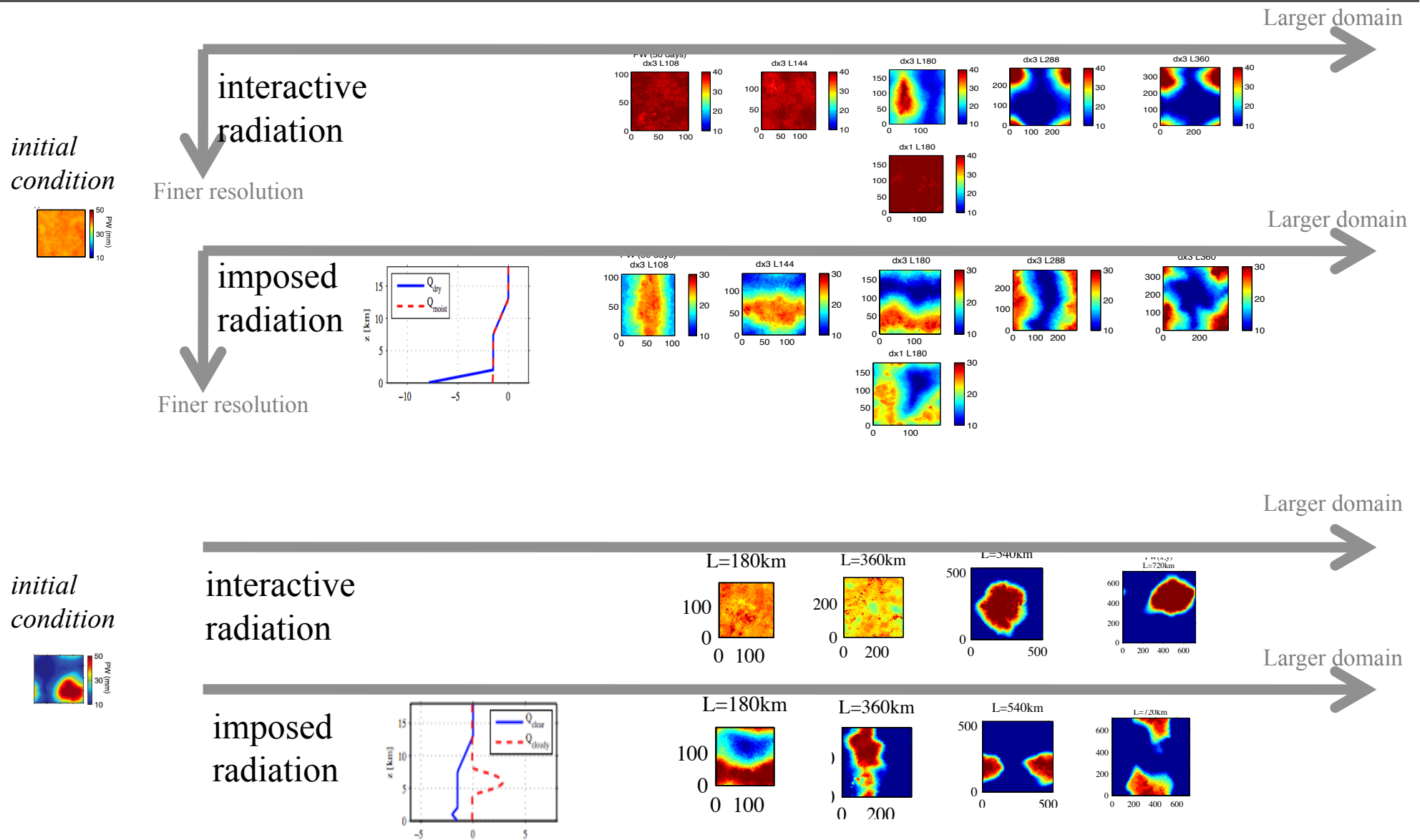


Imposed
radiation



⇒ low level cooling in clear region + mid level warming in cloudy region maintain aggregation

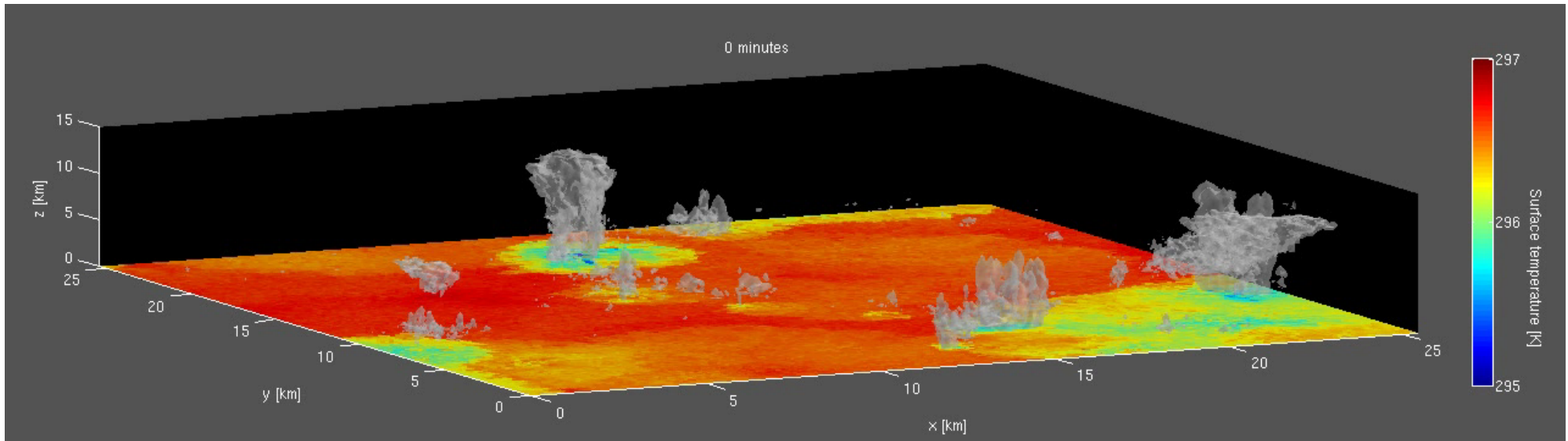
Self-Aggregation: domain size / resolution



⇒ Domain size & resolution dependence due to **variability in radiative cooling** between dry and moist regions (more low clouds at coarse resolution [Khairoutdinov et al, JAMES 09]
more variability on large domains)

Self-Aggregation: cold pools

Clouds over near-surface temperature



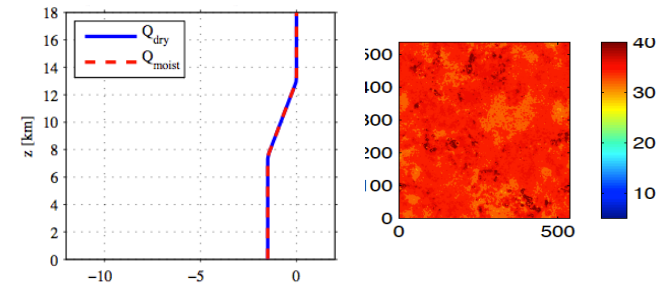
Evaporation-driven cold pools below clouds

[Jeevanjee&Romps 2013 GRL]

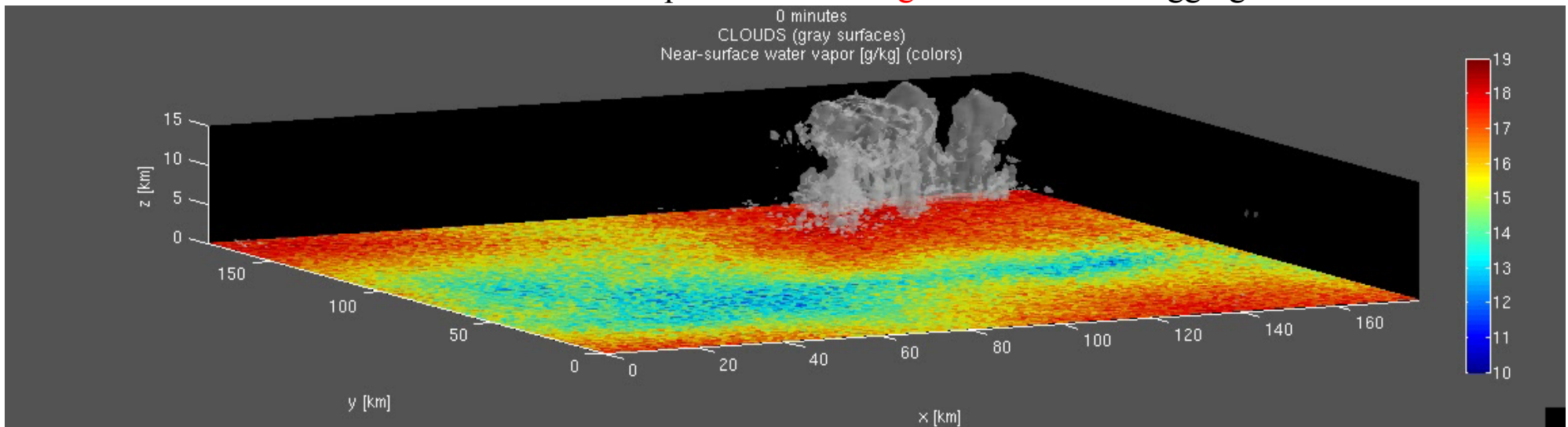
Let's remove cold pools (turn off evaporation of rain in lowest km)

Self-Aggregation: cold pools

Recall:
no self-aggregation with homogeneous radiation



BUT: Simulation without cold pools **with homogeneous radiation** aggregates



⇒ not same feedback

Water vapor « memory » feedback is responsible for aggregation [*Tompkins JAS 2001, Craig&Mack JGR 2013*], no downdraft to kill the cloud

Maybe deserves another name « moisture-memory » aggregation

Self-Aggregation

SUMMARY PART 3: SELF-AGGREGATION OF CONVECTION

⇒ **Variability of radiative cooling** between dry and moist regions leads to aggregation

Need either strong low-level cooling in dry region,
or low-level cooling in dry region + mid-level warming in moist region

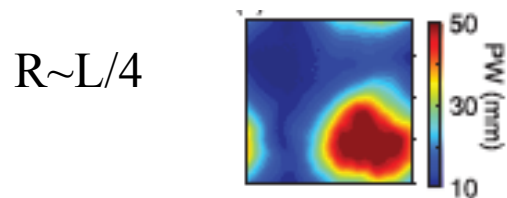
⇒ « **moisture-memory** » feedback leads to aggregation

Relevant in humid conditions (i.e. weak cold pools)

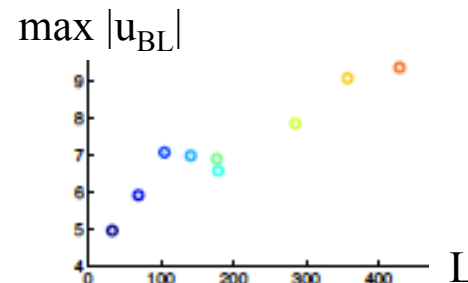
Impact on large scales: **towards a parameterization?** $\text{agg} = \text{fcn}(\Delta Q_{\text{rad}}, qv_{\text{BL}})$
(fcn depends on feedback)

How can CRMs help? Few issues:

- Impact on thermo not clear (drying = cause or consequence?)
- Impact on TOA rad not clear (OLR increase balanced by SW increase?)
- Properties (circulation, size cluster) depend on domain size



$$2\pi R |u_{\text{BL}}| \sim A_{\text{sub}} w_{\text{sub}} \sim L^2 \Rightarrow |u_{\text{BL}}| \sim L$$



[Muller, Bony, GRL in prep 2015]

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- ⇒ **Clouds** are important ingredients of the **climate** system (radiation, transport...)
- ⇒ Uncertainties in **convective parameterizations** propagate through climate models
- ⇒ **Organization** still poorly understood and typically not accounted for in parameterizations
- ⇒ **Observations, theory** and high-resolution **cloud-resolving models** useful



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